IḤIDAYUTHA

A Study of the Life of Singleness in the Syrian Orient. From Ignatius of Antioch to Chalcedon 451 A.D.

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ARAM Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies

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The king said to them, 'What kind of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things?' They answered him, 'He wore a garment of haircloth, with a girdle of leather about his loins.' And he said, 'It is Elijah the Tishbite'. Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty men with his fifty. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a mountain, and said to him, 'O man of God, the king says, 'Come down.'' But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, 'If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty....' (*2Kings*, 1, 7-10).

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' Now John wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.... (*Mt.* 3, 1-4).

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets-- who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated-- of whom the world was not worthy-- wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (*Heb.* 11, 32-38).

PREFACE

This work on early Syrian asceticism is by no means the first. Many scholars have approached this subject from a number of different ways. In *Das Morgenländische Mönchtum*, for example, Schiwietz wrote widely about the Syrian hermits and their life in the desert, but his work was mainly narrative in character. Schiwietz was more interested in writing a book about the life of the Syrian hermits than considering their ascetic theology and the origin of their spirituality and there is still no substantial study of the ascetic spirituality which inspired the Syrian hermits. The first chapters of Schiwietz's book, which aim to provide some idea of the ascetic spirituality of the Syrian Church before th fourth century and its historical background, do not satisfy our curiosity to knc the roots of the ascetic Syrian movement of the fourth and fifth centurie Despite its age, however, Schiwietz's study remains a good source of referenc for Syrian asceticism and its criticism of some aspects of eremitic spirituality deserves respect and consideration.

Vööbus' *History of Asceticism* is one of the most extensive works on Syrian Christendom available and it constitutes a masterly study of Syrian asceticism. It serves as a basic source for references to early Syrian asceticism, as it discusses all the available documents on the subject, and gives a wonderful introduction to the Syrian ascetics. Yet, Vööbus' analysis of the origin of the Syrian asceticism is not accepted by most scholars. He believes that monastic life in the Syrian Church originated from Manichaeism, and he therefore regards the Syrian ascetic movement as a heretical one, deeply influenced by a dualistic ideology and by the rejection of the material world which originated in the Gnostic movements of the ancient Near East. Vööbus has overstated the influence of Manichaeism on the Syrian ascetics. There is no clear evidence of any direct contact between the Syrian ascetics and Manichaeism, and Vööbus' theory belongs ultimately to the realm of the imagination. The major drawback of his work is that he does not make any serious link between Orthodox Syrian theology and Syrian ascetic spirituality.

In *Antioche païenne et chrétienne* Festugière drew mainly on the Greek sources of the Syrian hermits and limited his work to the hermits of Antioch and its surrounding region during the time of Libanius and Chrysostom, continuing to the mid fifth century. Despite its importance, this book is of secondary interest for the present work as it only deals with some of the Syrian hermits, the hermits of Antioch, and it gives a place of special importance to Libanius, the Emperor Julian, John Chrysostom and other disciples of Libanius. Although none of these areas are of primary importance for my own purpose, the author provides us with a good translation of the life of Symeon the Stylite by Antony and he offers

a fine study of the life of some of the other hermits in the region of Antioch. Canivet, in *Monachisme syrien*, deals primarily with the hermits of Theodoret's *Historia Religiosa*. The book is a good guide to the geographical locations of the Syrian hermits (some of which are either unknown, or impossible to locate with any accuracy). In fact, the book appears to have been written as a companion to the two-volume French translation of the *Historia Religiosa*, by Canivet and Leroy Molinghen, *Théodoret de Cyr - Histoire des moines de Syrie. Monachisme syrien* thus gives us an excellent introduction to the *Historia Religiosa* and a good overview of Theodoret of Cyrrhus, our main source for the lives of the early Syrian hermits. Regarding the other themes of the book, Canivet is very general in his approach to the spirituality of the Syrian hermits; nor does he offer any genuinely new ideas, preferring instead to follow the lines of analysis adopted by his predecessors.

METHOD OF WORK

The purpose of this work on early Syrian asceticism is not to repeat what has already been advanced and argued by other scholars or simply to write a new book on Syrian asceticism; rather, my aim is to suggest and pursue the following main points:

1. That there is a continuity of tradition in Syrian ascetic spirituality and that the roots of what the Syrian hermits of the fourth and fifth centuries undertook can be traced back to the very beginnings of the spirituality of their Syrian church. The scholars who have written on Syrian asceticism have failed to pay sufficient attention to the continuity of Syrian ascetic spirituality during its different periods of evolution. In this work, I strongly emphasize the continuous presence of Syrian theology in ascetic spirituality and I will argue that the first Syrian hermits drew the principle elements of their eremitic beliefs and the inspiration for their eremitic vocation from the orthodox teachings of the Syrian Church.

2. Following on from the first point, I will argue that Syrian ascetic spirituality needs to be studied in the context of the main structure of Syrian theology. The way of death and life, the descent into sheol and resurrection, the struggle of sinful humanity to go back to its original state of purity and virginity, and the way of discipleship of Christ and its goal of perfection: all these themes and other important topics of Syrian theology formed the basic spirituality of the Syrian ascetics and hermits. There was no independent Syrian ascetic spirituality different from that of the Church; rather the same spirituality became the basis for a wider understanding and was developed to fit the charisma of those who were seeking a radical and perfect commitment to Christ as ascetics and hermits.

3. I will further argue that virginity and marriage, celibacy and sexuality, were subjects of the first importance in the early Syrian Church, as well as in

early Syrian ascetic spirituality. Consequently, I have paid special attention to these themes. According to the Syrian Fathers, virginity does not only mean non-marriage and celibacy. It is primarily a concept of total purity in Christ which belongs to everybody who is baptized in Him, married or single. Moreover, the ascetics and the hermits did not choose celibacy because it was synonymous with virginity or because it was a rejection of marriage, but chiefly because it was a form of fasting, a denial of the sinful world and hence a way of preparing to receive the heavenly world which is the Kingdom of God.

My approach to Syrian ascetic spirituality is thus quite different from that of most Western scholars. My analysis of Syrian asceticism is integrated with the spirit of this Syrian spirituality and so it differs in many respects from that of my predecessors in this field. In order to remain loyal to the Syrian sources, and to maintain the authenticity of their spiritual basis, I have deliberately allowed the main texts of the Syrian ascetic writers to speak for themselves.

TIME SPAN

My concern is with the Syrian hermits in the period from the fourth through to the mid-fifth century. To some extent, it is Theodoret of Cyrrhus' *Historia Religiosa* which imposed this time-span on my work. Another reason lies in the fact that the Syrian Christian world came increasingly under the influence of Greek Christian culture from the middle of the fifth century onwards, and Syrian monasticism in its turn came under the influence of Egyptian monasticism. Accordingly I have tried to avoid dealing with any developments in Syrian acseticism after the Council of Chalcedon (451).

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

My work is based on the Syrian Church, by which I understand the early Church of Lebanon, Syria and Iraq (Mesopotamia) with its two traditions, Greek and Syriac. Sometimes I use the expression the 'Syrian Orient' which has never been clearly defined by scholars. For the present purpose, the term 'Syrian Orient' refers to the area of the Syrian Church. The Southern part of Syria, i.e. Palestine, is thus excluded from this work because the liturgical tradition of Jerusalem is quite distinct from that of Antioch. Similarly, the Palestinian Aramaic dialect is quite different from the Aramaic dialect of Northern Mesopotamia. There is no homogeneous Christian tradition linking Antioch and Jerusalem and for this reason my research entirely excludes the Palestinian monastic tradition. The chief guide to the area of my work is undoubtedly Theodoret of Cyrrhus whose hermits are predominantly those of North Syria. With the exception of Aphrahat and the author of the *Liber Graduum*, both of whom were writing in areas governed by the Sassanids, the main sources of my work come from the parts of the Syrian Orient which were within the Roman Empire.

DIVISION OF THE WORK

This work is divided into two parts, *Syrian asceticism before the rise of Eremitism,* and *Syrian eremitism before Chalcedon 451 A.D.* The first part is an introductory study of the early Syrian Fathers, and should not be seen as a critical study of early Syrian spirituality or a fully developed study of its main theological lines. The *Acts of Thomas*, however, is an important book for the history of early Syrian asceticism; accordingly, special attention is paid to its ascetic spirituality and a new analysis will be offered of some of its themes. An important mention must also be made of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama (the Covenanters)*, whose ascetic life played a substantial role in the development of early Syrian asceticism. The second part constitutes the main body of the work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Dr. Sebastian Brock (University of Oxford) who agreed to the pursuit of this research under his direction in Oxford. I am indebted to him for his deep understanding of Syrian spirituality, his love for the Syrian church, and for the part he has played in guiding my work. I am very grateful to Dr Paul Williamson who kindly reviewed my English.

A special thank is due to Mr Toufic Aboukhater for his generous gift to cover the expenses of this book.

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

I would like to warn the reader that this work is done on the Ventura programme which later proved to be incapable of answering all the needs of this work. Concerning the Semitic diacritical points, some friends helped me to set up a system, which was very useful to add the diacritical points into the body of the text, but not in the footnotes. In view of the many unexpected technical difficulties with this new system, I have deliberately omitted some of the diacritical points. Also, I ask the reader to forgive the inconsistency of the chapter breaks and spacing; this is due to the limited capacity of the Ventura programme to cope with the layout of this work.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycum.*
Abr-n	*Abr-Nahrain.* Leiden.
AEcR	*American Ecclesiastical Review.* Washington D.C.
AEPHE.R	*Annuaire de l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes.* Paris.
AJSL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures.* Chicago.
AJT(B)	*American Journal of Theology.* Baltimore.
AnBoll	*Analecta Bollandiana.* Bruxelles.
AnSt	*Anatolian Studies.* London.
ApVar	*Apostolos Varnavas.* Nicosia.
Aram	Oxford.
AT	*Acts of Thomas.*
AThANT	*Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments.* Zürich.
AThR	*Anglican Theological Review.* New York
BAB	*Bulletin de l'Academie Royale de Belgique.* Bruxelles.
BEO	*Bulletin des Etudes Orientales de l'Institut Francais de Damas.* Damas.
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies.* London.
Byz	*Byzantion.* Bruxelles.
CAH	*The Cambridge Ancient History.* Cambridge.
CathEnc	*Catholic Encyclopedia.* New York.
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly.* Washington, D.C.
CBU	*Contributions of Baltic University.* Pinneberg.
ChH	*Church History.* Chicago.
CLM	*Charbel-Liban Mystique.* Kaslik Liban.
CMH	*Cambridge Medieval History.* Cambridge.
CQR	*Church Quarterly Review.* London.
CSCO	*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.* Louvain.

DACL	*Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie.* Paris
DB(H)	*Dictionary of the Bible.* Ed. by Hastings. Edinburgh.
DBS	*Dictionnaire de la Bible. Supplément.* Paris
DHGE	*Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastiques.* Paris.
DR	*Downside Review.* Bath.
DSp	*Dictionnaire de Spiritualité.* Paris.
DThC	*Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique.* Paris.
ECR	*Eastern Churches Review.* Oxford.
ed.	Editor.
EJ(D)	*Encyclopedia Judaica.* Berlin.
EL	*Ephemerides Liturgicae.* Città del Vaticano.
EOr	*Echos d'Orient.* Bucuresti.
Eph	Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Ephesians.*
ERE	*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.* Edinburgh.
EtCarm	*Etudes Carmélitaines.* Paris.
EThL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses.* Louvain.
ECQ	*Eastern Church Quarterly.* Ramsgate.
FZPhTh	*Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie.* Freiburg-Schweiz.
GGA	*Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen.* Göttingen.
GOFS	*Göttingen Orientforschungen.* Reihe I, Syriaca. Wiesbaden.
GRBS	*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies.* Cambridge, Mass.
HeyJ	*Heythrop Journal.* Oxford.
HibJ	*Hibbert Journal.* London.
HE	*Historia Ecclesiastica.*
HR	Theodoret, *Historia Religiosa.*
HSCP	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology.* Cambridge, Mass.
HThR	*Harvard Theological Review.* Cambridge, Mass.
Int.	*The Interpreter.*
Irén	*Irénikon.* Chevetogne.

JA	*Journal Asiatique.* Paris.
JAC	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum.* Münster.
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society.* Baltimore.
JARS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.* London.
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature.* Philadelphia.
JE	*Jewish Encyclopedia.* New York.
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History.* London.
JEOL	*Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Eqyptisch Genootschappen "Ex oriente lux".* Leiden.
JR	*Journal of Religion.* Chicago.
JSOR	*Journal of the Society of Oriental Research.* Toronto.
JSSt	*Journal of Semitic Studies.* Manchester.
JSyrA	*Journal of the Syriac Academy.* Bagdad.
JThS	*Journal of Theological Studies.* Oxford.
LuC	*Lumen Caecis.* St Ottilien.
LThK	*Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche.* Freiburg-Deutschland.
LCL	*The Loeb Classical Library.* London, Cambridge, Mass.
Melto	Kaslik-Liban.
MB	*Musée Belge.* Louvain.
Mag.	Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians.*
Mach	*Al-Machriq.* Beyrouth.
Muséon	*Le Muséon.* Louvain.
NANF	*Nicene and Anti-Nicene Fathers.* Grand Rapid & Michigan
NCE	*New Catholic Encyclopaedia.* New York.
NedThT	*Nederlands(ch)e Theologisch Tijdschrift.* Wageningen.
NPNF	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church.* Michigan.
NT	*Novum Testamentum.* Leiden.
NTApo	*Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Ubersetzung.* Hg v. Edgar Hennecke. Tübingen.

NTS	*New Testament Studies.* Cambridge.
Numen	Leiden.
OG	Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos.*
OLoP	*Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica.* Louvain.
OrChr	*Oriens Christianus.* Roma.
OrChrA	*Orientalia Christiana Analecta.* Roma.
OrChrP	*Orientalia Christiana Periodica.* Roma.
OrSuec	*Orientalia Suecana.* Uppsala.
OrSyr	*Orient Syrien.* Paris.
ParOr	*Parole de l'Orient.* Kaslik-Liban.
PETSE	*Papers of the Estonian Theological Society in Exile.* Stockholm.
PG	*Patrologia Graeca.* Paris.
Phil.	Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Philadelphians.*
PL	*Patrologia Latina.* Paris.
PO	*Patrologia Orientalis.* Paris.
POC	*Proche-Orient Chrétien.* Jérusalem.
Poly.	Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to Polycarp.*
PRE	*Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Alterthumswissenschaft. NA begonnen von Georg Wissowa.* Stuttgart.
PS	*Patrologia Syriaca.* Paris.
PTS	*Patristische Texte und Studien.* Berlin.
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum.* Stuttgart.
RAM	*Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique.* Toulouse.
RAr	*Revue Archéologique.* Paris.
RB	*Revue Biblique.* Paris.
RBen	*Revue Bénédictine de Critique, d'Histoire et de Litérature Religieuses.* Abbaye de Maredsous.
RdQ	*Revue de Qumran.* Paris.
RE	*Realencyklopädie für Protestantische Theologie und Kirche.*

REByz	*Revue d'Etudes Byzantines.* Paris.
RelSt	*Religious Studies.* London.
RevSR	*Revue des Sciences Religieuses.* Strasbourg.
RGG	*Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft.* Tübingen.
RH	*Revue Historique.* Paris.
RHE	*Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique.* Louvain
RHPhR	*Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuse.* Strasbourg.
RHR	*Revue de l'histoire des Religions.* Paris.
RMab	*Revue Mabillon.* Paris.
ROC	*Revue de l'Orient Chretien.* Paris.
Rom.	Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Romans.*
RQH	*Revue des Questions Historiques.* Paris.
RSR	*Recherches de Science Religieuse.* Paris.
RThPh	*Revue de Théologie et de philosophie.* Lausanne.
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes.* Paris.
SCA	*Studies in Christian Antiquities.* Washington D.C.
SeC	*The Second Century. A Journal of Early Christian Studies.* Abilene, Texas.
SJTh	*Scottish Journal of Theology.* Edinburgh.
Smyr.	Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans.*
Sob	*Sobornost.* London.
Sou	*Sourozh.* London.
SpirO	*Spiritualité Orientale.* Abbaye de Bellefontaine, France.
StAns	*Studia Anselmiana.* Roma.
StEv	*Studia Evangelica.* Berlin.
StMon	*Studia Monastica.* Barcelona.
StPatr	*Studia Patristica.* Berlin.
StTh	*Studia Theologica.* Lund.
Subs.	Subsidia.

Syr.	Syriac.
Syria	Paris.
TaS	*Texts and Studies.* Cambridge.
Theol(P)	*Théologie.* Faculté de théologie . Lyon-Fourvière.
ThGl	*Theologie und Glaube.* Paderborn.
ThH	*Théologique Historique.* Paris.
ThQ	*Theologie Quartalschrift.* Tübingen.
ThWNT	*Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament.* Stuttgart.
tr.	Translation.
Trad	*Traditio.*
Tral.	Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Trallians.*
TRE	*Theologische Realenzyklopädie.* Berlin.
TS	*Theological Studies.* Woodstock (USA)
TU	*Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur.* Berlin.
VigChr	*Vigiliae Christianae.* Amsterdam.
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.* Wiesbaden.
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins.* Wiesbaden.
ZKTh	*Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie.* Wien.
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft.* Berlin.
ZS	*Zeitschrift für Semitistik.* Leipzig.
ZThK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche.* Tübingen.
ZWTh	*Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftliche Theologie.* Jena.

PART I

SYRIAN ASCETICISM BEFORE THE RISE OF EREMITISM

I. THE EARLY SYRIAN FATHERS

A. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

Ignatius of Antioch, the bishop of Antioch, is known through his letters,[1] the only source of biographical material.[2] He was arrested and sent to Rome *to be eaten by the beasts*[3] under the reign of the Emperor Trajan (98-117). Ignatius' journey[4] from Syria to Rome took him first from Antioch to Philadelphia in Lydia,[5] where he spent a few days, and then to Smyrna, where he was welcomed by Bishop Polycarp.[6] From Smyrna, he wrote four letters, addressed to the Ephesians,[7] the Magnesians,[8] the Trallians[9] and the Romans.[10] Later he moved to Troas, from where he wrote three further letters: to the Philadelphians,[11] the Smyrneans[12] and finally to Polycarp.[13] He arrived at the port of Phillippi in Macedonia, and from there was taken to Rome. The precise year of Ignatius' martyrdom is unknown, but the most probable date is somewhere between 108 and 117/18.[14]

1 I refer to Lake's English translation of Ignatius' letters, *The Apostolic Fathers.* For more details on Ignatius, cf. Corwin, *St Ignatius of Antioch*; Richardson, *The Christianity of Ignatius of Antioch*; Meinhold, *Studien zu Ignatius von Antiochien.*

2 Eusebius, *HE*, III, 36, summarised the life of Ignatius; his summary was based on the letters, which are still our only source of information on Ignatius. Saint Jerome, again taking the letters as his basis, also mentions Ignatius, *De viris illustribus,* 16, *PL* 23, 632-635; there is nothing new in his commentary. Another document touching on Ignatius' life is *The Acts of Ignatius' Martyrdom*; since this was not written until the fourth or fifth century, it cannot be considered a reliable source for Ignatius' life. Texts and translations from the Greek, with analysis, have been prepared by Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*; 263-536; 571-584; cf. Bolhuis, 'Die Acta romana', 7, 143-153.

3 Cf. *Phld.* 10, 1; *Smyr.* 11, 2.

4 The present summary is based on Eusebius, *HE.* III, 36 and the commentary of Lawlor and Oulton, *Eusebius, The Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine* II, 109-110.

5 Cf. *Rom.* 5, 1.

6 Cf. *Smyr.* 10.

7 Cf. *Eph.* 2, 1.

8 Cf. *Mag.* 15.

9 Cf. *Tral.* 1; 12.

10 Cf. *Rom.* 10.

11 Cf. *Phld.* 11.

12 Cf. *Smyr.* 12.

13 Cf. *Poly.* 8.

14 Eusebius' *Chronicle* fixed the year 108 as that of Ignatius' martyrdom, Jerome's *Chronicle* adopted the same date, while Malalas decided on 115; but these 'chroniclers evidently had no consistent or reliable information', Downey, *A History of Antioch,* 292. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers,* 433-473 maintained the date of 100-118; Harnack, *Die Chronologie* I, 381-406 prefers a date of between 110-117 and possibly as late as 125; Corwin, *St. Ignatius,* 3, argues for a date between 108 and 117; and, finally, Downey is very precise on the subject, *A History of Antioch,* 293: 'his death... may have taken place on 20 December, AD

The role of Ignatius in the development of the early Syrian Church was very important and he is undoubtedly one of the most famous figures amongst the early Christians. His spirituality, his character, and all his writings reflect the early Syrian Christian theology and consequently he is an important source for the study of early Syrian asceticism.

Ignatius' mysticism is based on the principle of unity: the unity of God and His Church. It is built on two pillars, faith and love, which are unified with flesh and blood; this unity is realised through discipleship and imitation of Jesus Christ. Ignatius also believes that God and the Church are one, and that the Church on this earth reflects the heavenly Church. In his view, both are one Church together, the Church of God.[15] God, the invisible head of the Church who was made manifest through Jesus Christ his Son, is always present through His earthly bishop.[16] Thus, the visible bishop of the Church is led by the invisible bishop[17] and appointed *by the will of Jesus Christ;*[18] his name is *Theophoros,* the God-bearer.[19] Moreover, the bishop is surrounded by presbyters who form a *spiritual crown,*[20] like Jesus Christ surrounded by the Apostles.[21] The bishop is also accompanied by the deacons, who are servants of Jesus Christ,[22] and the ambassadors of God.[23]

Christians must be united with their bishop and his presbytery *as the Church is with Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is with the Father, that all things may sound together in unison.*[24] Yet our unity with God is an 'agape'[25] of faith and love, and therefore the Church has *one Eucharist (for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup of union with his blood, one altar, as there is one bishop with the presbytery and the deacons...), in order that whatever* (we) *do* (we) *may do it according unto God.*[26] This Eucharist, the sign of our unity, *is the medicine of immortality, the antidote that we should not die, but live forever in Jesus Christ.*[27] Finally, one important point of Ignatius' spirituality is his view

116'.

15 Cf. *Mag.* 7; *Eph.* 4, 2; 5; *Phil.* 10, 1.
16 *Eph.* 6, 1; *Tral.* 3; *Smyr.* 9, 1; *Poly.* 6, 1.
17 Cf. *Mag.* 3.
18 *Eph.* 3, 2.
19 *Eph. Intr*; *Mag. Intr*; *Tral. Intr*; *Rom. Intr*; *Phld. Intr.*; *Smyr. Intr*; *Poly. Intr*; cf. Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers,* 21-22.
20 *Mag.* 13, 1.
21 Cf. *Mag.* 6, 1; *Tral.* 3, 1; *Phld.* 5, 1.
22 Cf. *Tral.* 2, 3; *Mag.* 6, 1.
23 Cf. *Phld.* 10, 1.
24 *Eph.* 5, 1; cf. *Mag.* 6, 2; 13; *Tra.* 2, 1; 12, 2; *Phld. Intr.*; 8, 1; *Poly.* 6, 1; *Smyr.* 8, 1; *Eph.* 2, 2.
25 Cf.Colson, *Agape (Charité) chez Saint Ignace d'Antioche.*
26 *Phld.* 4; cf. *Smyr.* 7, 1; 8, 1; *Mag.* 7, 2; *Tral.* 7, 2; 8, 1.
27 *Eph.* 20, 2.

that Christian perfection may be attained through the sufferings of the Cross and through martyrdom.[28]

B. DIDACHE

The *Didache*, or the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, is an important document of early Christianity which sheds light on important Christian doctrines and aspects of early Christian daily practices. The precise place and date of its composition cannot be accurately fixed, though it seems likely that it is of Syrian origin[29] and most probably dates from the late first century.[30] Although it was originally written in Greek, the *Didache* was known to the Christian world only through an incomplete Latin version. The Greek text was discovered at the end of the last century.[31]

The *Didache* is well known for its teaching on the Two Ways, the Way of Life and the Way of Death: *The Way of life is this: 'First, thou shalt love the God who made thee, secondly thy neighbour as thyself; and whatsoever thou wouldst not have done to thyself, do not thou to another....'*[32] *But the Way of death is this: First of all, it is wicked and full of cursing, murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, witchcrafts, charms, robberies, false witness, hypocrisies, a double heart, fraud pride, malice, stubbornness, covetousness, foul speech, jealousy, impudence, haughtiness, boastfulness....*[33] This spirituality, based on the concept of the Two Ways, may have influenced the lives of the first Syrian ascetics and hermits. Through their asceticism, these early ascetics sought complete purification from the Way of Death, in order to live as fully as possible according to the teaching of the Word of God, the Way of Life offered in the *Didache*. Other aspects of the *Didache* parallel important themes of later Syrian ascetic spirituality.

28 See Ignatius' letter to the *Romans*.

29 Cf. Vööbus, *The Liturgical Traditions in the Didache*, 13-14; 155-157; Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, (2nd ed.), 145-146; Rordorf & Tuilier, *La Doctrine*, 13ff.

30 The date of composition is still disputed by scholars: some believe it was written either in the second half of the second century or early in the third century, while others regard it as a compilation of different authors from the first, second, and third centuries; cf. Lake. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 146; Connolly, 'The Didache and Montanism', 339-341; Vööbus, *Liturgical Traditions*, 12.

31 Cf. Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 305-306.

32 *Didache*, I, 2, I use Lake's translation in *The Apostolic Fathers*. The *Didascalia* also links the Two Ways with the First Law and the Second Legislation, cf. *Didascalia*, 33;244-246.

33 *Didache*. V, 1.

C. THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH

Theophilus of Antioch, the seventh bishop of Antioch (169-181/2),[34] was brought up and educated as a Greek.[35] He may have been of Mesopotamian origin[36] and it is possible that he was married.[37] Theophilus encountered the Scriptures and converted to Christianity only after he had reached manhood;[38] it is generally supposed that he died sometime before 188 A.D.[39] Although Theophilus of Antioch wrote many books only *Ad Autolycum* has survived,[40] addressed to a pagan friend called *Autolycus.*[41] This work provides some important insights into the theology of the church in Antioch during the second half of the second century.[42] The theology of Theophilus is based entirely on the Bible[43] and clearly demonstrates the superiority of Christianity over paganisr In fact, the main subject of *Ad Autolycum* is the perennial theme of the ea Syrian church, the unity of God and man.

Theophilus is radically monotheistic in his theology; God, who is absolu *truth,* is *one*, while polytheistic paganism is the work of *error*, propagated by *demons.* Moreover, the *truth* of God is beyond words and language, it is an inner matter: *The man who loves truth, however, pays no attention to defiled language but examines the fact behind the word to see what it is and what it means.*[44] For the early Church the attack on paganism was crucial and Theophilus paid special attention to this theme throughout his work. He believed that paganism was related to the disunity and disharmony caused by Adam and Eve; the result of the corrupted marriage of man and woman which gave birth to the false *gods.*[45] *The sons of gods* were *idols*[46] in the truest sense, *the works of men's hand* (and) *the multitude of foolish men worship these, but they reject the Maker and Fashioner of the universe, the Nourisher of all breath, in obedience to vain*

34 Cf. Devreesse, *Le Patriarcat d'Antioche,* 115.
35 Cf. *Ad Autolycum,* II, 25; III, 3; cf. Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch,* ix; Downey, *A History of Antioch,* 301.
36 Cf. *Ad Autolycum,* II, 24; cf. Harris, *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon,* II, 68; Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch,* ix.
37 Cf. *Ad Autolycum,* II, 28.
38 Cf. *Ad Autolycum,* I, 14; II/30, 33; III, 26, 30; Downey, *History of Antioch,* 301.
39 Cf. Downey, *History of Antioch,* 301; Devreesse, *Patriarcat d'Antioche,* 115: 'mort après mars 181 ou 182'.
40 Cf. Downey, *History of Antioch,* 301; Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch,* ix. I refer to Grant's translation.
41 Cf. *Ad Autolycum,* I, 1; II, 1; III, 1.
42 For the theology of *Ad Autolycum,* cf. Grant, *Jesus after the Gospels,* 68-82; Nautin, 'Notes critiques sur Theophilus d'Antioche'; Loofs, 'Theophilus von Antiochien'.
43 Cf. *Ad Autolycum,* I, 14; II, 30-35; III, 9-13, 17, 23, 29, 30.
44 *Ad Autolycum,* I, 1.
45 Cf. *Ad Autolycum,* II, 28-35.
46 Cf. *Ad Autolycum,* II, 22, 35.

doctrines because of the hereditary error of their unintelligent opinion.[47] The *gods* who represented by *idols* are in fact *men*[48] who have *transgressed* against the *law of God.*[49]

The conflict between the one true God and the many gods of the pagans developed into a clear struggle between monotheism and polytheism: the difference between the true existent God who was universal and the *non-existent gods* who were limited and perishable.[50] This was a fight between Christianity and paganism, for Christianity entailed the belief in the unity of *One God* while paganism fostered the disunity of *many gods.*[51] For Theophilus of Antioch, moreover, it was a question primarily of *truth* and *error: For this reason it is plain that all the rest* (i.e. pagan poets) *were in error and that only the Christians have held the truth--we are instructed by the Holy Spirit who spoke in the holy prophets and foretold everything.*[52]

Christian *doctrine is neither modern nor mythical but more ancient and true than all the poets and historians* (of paganism) *who wrote on what they knew nothing about.*[53] Therefore, Theophilus considered the *truth in* paganism to be like a *deadly poison* (which) *when mixed with honey or wine or anything else makes the whole harmful and useless.*[54] In spite of this strong rejection of paganism, Theophilus of Antioch recognised many positive values in the old beliefs which were in harmony with Christianity,[55] for *some poets, becoming sober in soul and departing from the demons made statements in agreement with those of the prophets.*[56]

47 *Ad Autolycum*, II, 34.
48 Cf. *Ad Autolycum*, II, 8, 34.
49 Cf. *Ad Autolycum*, II, 17, 29-35.
50 Cf. *Ad Autolycum*, II, 3, 10; III, 9, 30.
51 *Ad Autolycum*, II, 35; III, 9, 30.
52 *Ad Autolycum*, II, 33.
53 *Ad Autolycum*, III, 16.
54 *Ad Autolycum*, II, 12.
55 Cf. *Ad Autolycum*, II, 8, 36-38.
56 *Ad Autolycum*, II, 8.

D. TATIAN

1. LIFE

Tatian was probably born between 110-120[57] of Syriac-speaking, pagan parents[58] in Assyria.[59] He was well-educated in Greek sciences and travelled widely in order to instruct himself in all aspects of Greek philosophy, finally ending his travels in Rome.[60] His travels in pursuit of high Greek culture required considerable funds, indicating that he came from a wealthy family.[61] It seems that in Rome Tatian became attracted by the life of the Christians[62] and their monotheism.[63] He met Justin Martyr, who deeply influenced his life, and became one of his disciples.[64] Tatian tells us that he was converted t Christianity by reading the Scriptures;[65] he decided to give up everything to le a poor and ascetic life in order to follow the truth of the Word of God.[66] T date of his conversion in Rome is unknown, but it seems likely that it occurr before the death of his teacher, Justin Martyr (163-167);[67] Saint Irenaeus tells us that when Tatian came back to the East after the martyrdom of Justin he was already a Christian.[68] According to Epiphanius, after his return to the East he established himself in Mesopotamia, where he founded his own school.[69] Tatian also taught the Scriptures in Rome, though unfortunately details about his activities in this city cannot be discussed due to the lack of source material.[70] The date of his death is unknown.

2. BOOKS

I want to compose an account of everything that I personally have come to know.[71] Tatian wrote many books: *On the Perfection according to the*

57 Zahn, *Tatian's Diatessaron,* 202, says that Tatian was born around AD 110. Bardy, 'Tatian', col. 59, assumes that Tatian was born probably around AD 120.

58 *OG (= Oratio ad Graecos),* 43; cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 32.

59 'He (Tatian) was from 'the land of the Assyrians', that is, from the land between the Tigris and Media on the west and east, and the Armenian mountains and Ctesiphon on the north and south. His home was probably in Hadiab', Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 32.

60 *OG*, 35-37, 42.

61 Whittaker, 'Tatian's Educational Background', 57.

62 *OG*, 32-33.

63 *OG*, 24.

64 Eusebius, *HE*, IV, 29, 1; *OG*, 20-21.

65 *OG*, 29-30.

66 *OG*, 19, 32.

67 Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 33.

68 Irenaeus, *Contra Haereses*, I, 26.

69 Epiphanius, *Haeres.* XLVI, I.

70 We do know, however, that a man called Rhodon was among his disciples in Rome, cf. Eusebius, *HE*, V, 13, 1, 8; and perhaps Clement of Alexandria was also taught by Tatian, cf. *Stromateis*, 1, 1.

71 *OG*, 15.

Saviour,[72] *On Animals,*[73] *On the Nature of Demons,*[74] *To Those Who Have Propounded Ideas About God,*[75] *The Book of Problems,*[76] and *the Discourse to the Greeks (Oratio ad Graecos).*[77] Unfortunately, all these books are lost apart from the *Discourse to the Greeks,* which forms the basis of present-day knowledge of Tatian's theology. Tradition also attributes to Tatian the *Diatessaron,* which is a harmony of the four gospels.[78]

3. ORTHODOXY

Saint Irenaeus reports that Tatian broke away from the church after the death of his teacher, Justin Martyr, and introduced many blasphemies:[79] ... *from Satorninus and Marcion those who are called Encratites*[80] *preached celibacy, setting at naught the primitive creation of God, and tacitly censuring Him who made male and female for the generation of mankind; and they introduced abstinence from such things as they call 'animate', thus showing ingratitude to God who has made all things. And they deny the salvation of the first-created man. And this last point was a recent invention of theirs, a certain Tatian having first introduced this blasphemy. He had been a hearer of Justin, and, as long as he was with him, gave vent to such doctrine; but after Justin's martyrdom he broke away from the church and, elated at the thought of being a teacher and puffed up with the idea that he was superior to the rest, formed a school with a distinctive character of its own. For a while he invented certain visible aeons, as did the followers of Valentinus; while he proclaimed marriage to be corruption and fornication, in a manner similar to Marcion and Satorninus: his own contribution was to deny the salvation of Adam.*[81] The accuracy of Irenaeus'

72 Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* III, 13.

73 *OG*, 15.

74 *OG*, 16.

75 *OG*, 40.

76 Eusebius, *HE* V, 13, 8.

77 This book was written in Greek; the circumstances of its composition are otherwise unknown, though it may have been written in Rome before Tatian's return to the East (163-167). Cf. Barnard, 'Heresy of Tatian', 1-3; Hawthorne, 'Tatian and His Discourse', 162; Bardy, 'Tatien', 61; Zahn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte,* 279; Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen* II, 286-289; Puech, *Recherches sur le Discours,* 3-4; Grant, 'The Date of Tatian's Oration', 99-101. I refer to Whittaker's edition of *Discourse to the Greeks* with his English translation, *Tatian, Oratio ad Graecos and Fragments.*

78 'The Syrians called it the *Evangelion da Mehallete* (the gospel of the mixed)', Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 39. See Murray, 'Reconstructing the Diatessaron', 43-49.

79 Irenaeus, *Contra Haereses,* i, 26, 1.

80 'Encratites. Persons who abstained from flesh and wine, and from marriage. Originally, it seems, they did not constitute a sect; Encratites were found in various heretical communities', Lawlor & Oulton, *Eusebius. Ecclesiastical History,* 150 (28).

81 Irenaeus in Eusebius, *HE,* IV, 27 (translated by Lawlor and Oulton).

criticism of Tatian is of doubtful accuracy when compared other available information:

- Irenaeus' knowledge of Tatian was apparently derived entirely from the *Discourse to the Greeks,*[82] which does not contain any clear heresy or blasphemy.[83]

- Irenaeus seems to have been insufficiently acquainted with Tatian's theology, for many important details and explanations are not mentioned and his deviation, or *blasphemy,* is not made clear. If Irenaeus did have full knowledge of Tatian's theology then he may well have misunderstood Tatian's position.[84]

- The Christian tradition which accused Tatian of heresy, especially encratism,[85] was based mainly on Irenaeus' text which, besides being shroud in confusion and contradiction, lacks evidence and objectivity.[86]

- Tatian's teaching on marriage is not encratic but rather an orthodox teaching which is in harmony with the teaching of the church. His rigorous views on the relations between men and women within marriage was also taught by many orthodox fathers and was a commonly held Christian view at this time.[87]

82 Cf. Hawthorne, 'Tatian and His Discourse', 57. 165; Grant, 'The Heresy of Tatian', 64.

83 'Some of the things for which Irenaeus condemned Tatian can hardly be classified as heresy...', Hawthorne, 'Tatian and His Discourse', 165-166. And Bardy, 'Tatien', 61 adds: 'Le Discours est une oeuvre catholique, en dépit des exagérations dont il est rempli....'

84 'If Irenaeus is shut up to the *Discourse* for his accusation of heresy, it is possible because he has misunderstood some of Tatian's statements...', Hawthorne, 'Tatian and His Discourse', 166; and Bardy, 'Tatien', 66 adds: 'Nous n'avons donc, à tout prendre que des renseignement inusffisants sur l'hérésie de Tatien, puisque nous ne savons pas dans quelle mesure il s'est fait le disciple de Valentinien imaginant des éons invisibles....'

85 Cf. Hippolytus, *Philosoph.* VIII, XVI, 20; Pseudo-Tertullian, *Adv. omnes haeres.* XX; Eusebius, *HE,* IV, XXVIII-XXIX; Philastrius, *Haeres.* XLVII, LXXII, LXXXIV; Epiphanius, *Haeres.* LXVI, XLVII. See also for details, Blond, 'Encratisme', 632-634, 637-638.

86 Bardy, 'Tatien', 66 comments on this point: 'Les hérésiologues postérieurs ont reproduit, avec des commentaires plus ou moins étendus, les données de saint Irénée.... Il est permis de se défier de ces commentaires. Eusèbe et Epiphane, par exemple, font de Tatien le fondateur de la secte des encratites, alors que saint Irénée rattache expressément sa doctrine sur la continence et sur le mariage à Saturnin et à Marcion....' And Blond, 'Encratisme', 638 adds: 'Aucun de ces auteurs proches des événements n'indique l'importance primitive du mouvement, ni le lieu de la défection de Tatien....' Hawthorne, 'Tatian and His Discourse', 165 agrees with Bardy and Blond.

87 Blond, 'Encratisme', 633 says: 'Rien de tout cela ne présentait un caractère particulièrement original, à une époque où le rigorisme était une doctrine couramment enseignée....' And Bardy, 'Tatien', 66 adds: 'De fait, on peu relever tout le long du IIe siècle, l'existence d'une tendance à la condamnation de la matière et par suite de la chair et du mariage. Cette tendance se manifeste aussi bien chez des auteurs qui paraissent sincèrement attachés à la grande Eglise que chez des écrivains franchement hérétiques et elle ne suffit pas à elle seule

- The Christian Churches have remained deeply divided over Tatian. One side, mainly in the West, has been unsympathetic and, since Irenaeus, has repeatedly accused him of deviating in the direction of encratism, even of being the founder of encratism in Christianity. Tatian is usually considered a heretic by the Western Church. Another branch of Christianity, mainly in the East, has been much more sympathetic to Tatian and even enthusiastic about his teaching. The Syrian Church, the Church of Tatian, has always considered him an orthodox Christian who fought against heresy.[88] Thus, the Christian Churches are not unanimous about Tatian and the process of his rehabilitation continues.[89]

- According to Eusebius, a certain Severus founded a sect, the Severians, which was based on Tatian[90] but this should not be accepted uncritically.[91]

- Epiphanius claims that Tatian broke from the church in 150;[92] according to Eusebius the break was made in 172;[93] while in Iranaeus' version it happened after the death of Justin Martyr (163-167). The basic claim, however, seems inconsistent both with what we know of Tatian historically and with what we know of his Christian personality.[94] Tatian's writings nevertheless contain much material which is ambiguous and difficult to interpret, and conclusions should always be hesitantly drawn.[95]

à caractériser une secte'. Hawthorne, 'Tatian and his Discourse', 166 states that 'Encratism seems to have been a spirit permeating the Christian church from its inception, even that aspect of encratism that repudiated marriage.'

88 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 39; Whittaker, *Tatian, Oratio*, ix; Hawthorne, 'Tatian and His Discourse', 61; cf. also Drijvers, 'East of Antioch: Forces and structures', 7ff.

89 Most modern scholars in the West still accuse Tatian of heresy, Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 34ff.; Whittaker, *Tatian, Oratio ad Graecos*, Xff.; Bernard, 'The Heresy of Tatian', 1ff; Grant, 'The Heresy of Tatian', 63 - 64ff; 'Tatian (or. 30) and the Gnostics', 65-69; Blond, 'Encratisme', 632ff. Others speak positively about him, Bardy, 'Tatien', 66.

90 Eusebius, *HE*, IV, 29, 4-6.

91 'Severus. Salmon doubts the existence of this person. Encratite sects may have got 'the Latin name of Severians from the austerity of their rule of life'. The Severians described here were probably Ebionites', Lawler & Oulton, *Eusebius*, 151(4). 'Eusèbe, *HE*, IV, XXIX, 4,5 parle d'une secte de sévériens, issue d'un certain Sévère, qui aurait encore renchéri sur l'hérésie de Tatien. Mais la description qu'il en donne est plutôt faite pour rattacher les sévériens aux judeo-chrétiens. Le souvenir de Tatien s'effaça d'ailleurs assez vite dans le monde gréco-romain, il ne resta vivant que dans les Eglises syriaques où l'on continuait à utiliser le Diatessaron', Bardy, 'Tatien', 66.

92 Epiphanius, *Panarion*, I, 3. 46.

93 Cf. Eusebius, *Chronicle*, XII, ed. Fotheringham, p. 288.

94 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 37. Hawthorne, 'Tatian and his Discourse', 166 says: 'Some orthodox writers of the early church considered Tatian as the opposite of a heretic; they spoke of him as the champion of orthodoxy. Rhodo, for example, Tatian's own pupil, testifies that he combated the heresy of Marcion'. CF. McGiffert, *The Church History of Eusebius* (NPNF), 208.

95 Grant, 'Studies in the Apologists', 123-134; Harnack, *Die Überlieferung der griechischen*

- Clement of Alexandria relates that Tatian attacked the holiness of the Christian marriage and rejected sexual contacts between man and woman in marriage. We do not have any direct teaching about Christian marriage from Tatian, only a few fragments concerning sexual relations in marriage attributed to him by Clement and Jerome. Clement of Alexandria says: *For one must not imagine, as some took him to mean, that a bond between husband and wife is declared to be a physical union leading to corruption. For he* (i.e. Paul) *blames the opinion of impious men who attribute the invention of marriage directly to the devil, an opinion which runs perilously close to blasphemy against him who made the law. I fancy that Tatian the Syrian had the hardihood to formulate suc doctrine. At any rate he writes word for word in 'On Perfection According to t Saviour'.*[96] *'Agreement goes suitably with prayer,*[97] *but partnership corruption weakens intercession'. At least he makes the concession in such a way as to put to shame and act as a restraint. For by conceding that they might come together because of Satan and lack of self-control he made it clear that anyone who would conform was going to serve two masters; through agreement he would serve God, but through want of agreement he would serve licence and fornication and the devil'. He says this by way of commentary on the apostle.*[98] This text of Tatian, as quoted by Clement, is a commentary on the words of St. Paul, *1Cor.* 7,5 and is concerned with precisely one case: prayer and sexuality between married people. Otherwise, there is nothing said against the holiness of marriage, only that sexuality which disturbs the time of prayer is *fornication* and from *the devil.* Moreover, in quoting this text, Clement stands alongside Tatian in defending the holiness of marriage against those who consider it an invention of the devil.[99]

- Another fragment from Tatian's teaching on sexuality is quoted by Jerome: *If anyone sows in the flesh, from the flesh he will reap corruption; now he who has sex with a woman sows in the flesh; therefore he too who has intercourse with a wife and sows in her flesh will reap corruption from the flesh.*[100] This text, however, is shrouded in confusion, for there is nothing to substantiate its authenticity. Is it really by Tatian or is it the work of some other author, wrongly quoted by Jerome?[101] Jerome does not mention the basis of his attribution of the text to Tatian.

Apologeten, 1; Whittaker, 'Some Textual Points in Tatian', 349-51.

96 This work is lost.

97 'I.e. mutual agreement to temporary abstinence from sexual intercourse in order to have more time for prayer', Whittaker, *Tatian, Oratio,* 81a.

98 Clement of Alexandria, 3, 12 p. 547, 17; the text is taken from Whittaker, *Tatian, Oratio,* 80-81.

99 For Tatian's teaching on women see *OG,* 32; 33; 34. Cf. Whittaker, *Tatian, Oratio,* 81.

100 Jerome, *in ep. ad. Gal.* 6, 8 t. VII, p. 526. Quoted from Whittaker, *Tatian, Oratio,* 82.

- Did Tatian speak to Christians or pagans about sexuality outside marriage, which was considered by the early church as an act of adultery and corruption, or did he comment on some biblical verses, comparable with this text, quoted by Jerome?[102] My own view is that in this text, Tatian, if it is Tatian, may be speaking either to pagans who indulged in sexual misbehaviour or to Christians who acted sinfully outside their marriage. It is certain that Jerome's putative quotation from Tatian contradicts the *Discourse to the Greeks*, his only extant book.

4. CONCLUSION

Caution is necessary before accusing Tatian of heresy, for there is no reliable evidence on the subject. Nor can Tatian be considered a deviant because, in the *Diatessaron*, he changed the Baptist's diet from locusts into a vegetarian one of milk and honey.[103] The encratite origin of the vegetarian diet of John the Baptist in the *Diatessaron* does not represent a heterodox position within Tatian's teaching because the early Church did not consider this view heretical.[104] It is important to understand Tatian in his contemporary context and especially to note that his own Church accepted him and respected his teaching.

E. THE ODES OF SOLOMON

The *Odes of Solomon*[105] are a Syrian Christian book[106] from the second century[107] and they have survived almost completely in the Syriac language.

101 'The evidence of this passage is doubtful', Whittaker, *Tatian, Oratio*, 83.

102 Cf. *Jn.* 3, 6; *Rom.* 8, 5-13; *Gal.* 5, 13-21.

103 Cf. Brock's explanation, 'The Baptist's Diet', 113-118; the alteration is also found in other sources.

104 Cf. Blond, 'Encratisme', 635ff.

105 The title does not attribute the authorship of the *Odes* to Solomon himself. The Solomon who is speaking in our *Odes* is not the Solomon of the Old Testament but rather an allegoric figure and type of Christ; cf. Batiffol, 'Les Odes de Salomon', 35. The Syriac text of the *Odes of Solomon* used in the present work is published by Harris, Mingana, *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon* I. The English translation can be found in Emerton, *The Odes of Solomon*, 691-731, with reference to the translation of Bernard, *The Odes of Solomon*, and Harris, Mingana, *The Odes and Psalms of Solomon* II. The *Odes* have recently been republished by Lattke, *Die Oden Salomos.*

106 Most writers believe that the *Odes of Solomon* have a Christian Syrian origin with a strong Judaeo-Christian influence, cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 62ff; Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 8; Daniélou, 'Odes de Salomon', 678-679; Grant, 'The Odes of Solomon', 363-377; Charlesworth, 'The Odes of Solomon', 369; Brock, *The Holy Spirit*, 27; Sparks, 'The Odes of Solomon', 684.

107 It is generally agreed that the *Odes* were composed in the second century AD: Bernard, *The Odes of Solomon*, 42, second half of the second century; Sparks, *Odes of Solomon*, 686, second century; Quasten, 'The Odes of Solomon', 160-168, first half of the second century; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 62, second century; Brock, *Holy Spirit*, 27, mid-second

Five *Odes* are also preserved in Coptic and one in Greek.[108] The *Odes of Solomon* are mystical hymns on the unity of God and the Creation. On the one hand, the Trinity manifests Himself to the Creation through the Son who freed the latter from darkness and gave it back to the Father through the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, God and His Creation are one because everything is from Him.[109] The principle of cosmic unity is very strong in the *Odes of Solomon* and if the *Odes* are sometimes charged with confusing the identity of their speaker, it is perhaps because we are trying to divide what is one in God Himself and because we are imposing upon them a dualism of our own making.[110] From the perspective adopted in the *Odes* there is no difference between the Master and His disciples, because *(He) speaks through their mouths, with living lips,*[111] and what is created one by God cannot be divided by men.

The character of the *Odes* is baptismal because the mystery of Christ's salvation in the *Odes* is the mystery of baptism in the Syrian Church.[112] The Holy Spirit, who is usually feminine in the *Odes of Solomon*, as in other Syrian writers up until the end of the fourth century and occasionally afterwards,[113] gives new children to the Father through the water of baptism. These are true children of God, like the Only Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ.[114]

century; Chadwick, 'Some Reflections', 266ff, first half of the second century; Conybeare, *The Odes of Solomon,* 70ff, before 175 AD; Pierce, 'Themes in the Odes of Solomon', 40, late second century or early third century. Other dates are suggested by: Harris, *The Odes of Solomon,* 68f, end of the first century; Charlesworth, *The Odes of Solomon,* 369, first century; Drijvers, 'Odes of Solomon and the Psalms of Mani', 129 c. 275.

108 Lattke, *Die Oden Salomos* I, 24ff.

109 Cf. *Odes* 16, 5-19; 12, 4; 22, 11; 24, 8; 42, 14; 6, 4; 4, 12.14; 7, 14; 11, 4;.18, 6.

110 *Odes* 17, 13; 4, 1-3; 8, 20; 22, 8; 33, 13; 23, 1-3; 11, 18-19; 17, 15; 21, 4; 26, 4; 22, 12; 42, 14. 8-9; 23, 7, 10.

111 *Ode* 42, 6.14.

112 The baptismal character of the *Odes of Solomon* was first mentioned by Bernard, *The Odes of Solomon*; he was followed by many others: cf. Aytoun, 'The Mysteries of Baptism', 1ff; Brock, *Holy Spirit,* 27; Daniélou, 'Odes de Salomon', 682; Pierce, 'Themes in the Odes', 48; 58-59. Other writers have opposed the baptismal interpretation of the *Odes*: cf. Harris, *Odes and Psalms,* 187-197; Charlesworth, 'The Odes of Solomon', 369; Grant, 'The Odes of Solomon', 364.

113 Pierce, 'Themes in the Odes', 46-47 says: 'In the *Odes of Solomon* not only the Spirit, but the Father as well, is given feminine attributes. But such feminine attributions to the Father are not at all unique to the *Odes.* In a passage from the *Gospel of Truth,* 23: 33-35; 24, 6-11, in Robinson, 41, strikingly similar to *Ode* 19, the author ascribes a feminine quality to God. Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 1.3.9, in the *NANF,* II, 220, as well wanted to explore the possibilities inherent in attributing feminine qualities of the Father'. About the Holy Spirit as feminine in the Syrian Church, cf. Brock, 'Come, compassionate Mother'.

114 Cf.*Odes* 36, 5; 19, 5; 35, 6; 28, 1; 35, 5-6; 25, 8. 19, 5-11; 3, 10; 16, 5; 6, 1-2.; 28, 2; 6, 7; 13, 2;.24, 3; 36, 8; 36, 1-2; 11, 2.

F. DIDASCALIA

The *Didascalia* is a book from the Syrian church originally written in Greek during the third century[115] and later translated into Syriac, the only text which survived.[116] The *Didascalia* is an important document for early Syrian spirituality and has a special place among early Christian sources.

1. THE LAW AND THE SECOND LEGISLATION

One important feature of the *Didascalia* is its teaching of the Law, which *consists of the ten sayings and the judgements, these which God spoke before the people made the calf and worshipped idols. Indeed, also that it is called the Law, (is) truly on account of the judgements. This is the simple and light Law. In it there is no burden, no distinction of meats, no incenses, nor offerings of sacrifices and burnt offerings. In this Law now, accordingly, He shows concerning the dispensation of the church and concerning the uncircumcision of the flesh only.*[117] In fact, the Law is *the first Law... which the Lord God spoke before the people had made the calf and served idols, that is the ten sayings and the judgements.*[118] Moreover, *the Law of the Lord*, or *the first Law*, is the Law of the church of God,[119] which leads the Christians to God: *for those men who obey God there is one law, simple and true and pleasant--which without question (is valid) for Christians (namely) this, that 'anything you hate that it should happen to you through another, do not do to another....'*[120] The Law consists mainly of the teaching of God, expounded before people took to worshipping the calf in the desert and later perfected in the Gospel: *Sit at home and read the Law and the Book of Kings and the prophets and the Gospel (which is) the fulfilment of these.*[121]

115 The Greek fragments which were published by Barlet belong to the fifth or sixth century and are thus earlier than the Syriac manuscripts; Barlet, 'Fragments of the Didascalia', 301-309; cf. also Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, 23-25; Brock, *The Holy Spirit*, 33; Connolly, 'The Use of the Didache in the Didascalia', xci; Galtier, 'La date de la Didascalie', 315-351.

116 The Syriac translation should perhaps be dated to the sixth century, for 'it contains features of translation technique which betray a date of at least the sixth century', Brock, *The Holy Spirit*, 22. For the widespread tradition of the Syriac manuscripts, see Vööbus, *The Didascalia* II, 6-69. The complete Syriac text of the *Didascalia* has been published with an English translation by Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum*; this edition will be used in the present work.

117 *Didascalia*, 241-243. Arabic numerals refer to the page number in Vööbus' edition. of the Syriac text (also given in the margin of his translation). Roman numerals refer to the classical division into chapters.

118 *Didascalia*, 18.

119 Cf. *Didascalia*, 103; 242; 246.

120 *Didascalia*, 13; 12.

121 *Didascalia*, 12(17); 183; 197; 244-245; 254.

The Second Law was imposed on sinners who did not obey the Lord and his prophets, but rather reverted to calf-worship and other Pagan practices: *Therefore the Lord became angry, and in the heat of His anger--(yet) with the mercy of His goodness--He bound them with the second legislation, and laid heavy burdens upon them and a hard yoke upon their neck. And He says now no longer: 'If you shall make as formerly', but he said: 'Make an altar, and sacrifice continually', as though He had need of these things. Therefore He laid upon them continual burnt offerings as a necessity, and caused them to abstain from meats through distinction of meats. Indeed, from that time were animals discerned, and clean flesh and unclean, from that time were separations, and purifications, and baptisms and sprinklings. And from that time were sacrifices and offerings, and tables. From that time were burnt offerings, and offerin and show bread, and the offering up of sacrifices, and firstlings, and ranso and he-goats for sin, and vows, and many other amazing things. For because the multitude of sins there were laid upon them customs unspeakable.*[122]

It might be said that all the rites and religious customs in the Old Testament derive from God's second legislation, whose purpose was the correction of those who had returned to the worship of idols. The Second Legislation was imposed on the people by God in order to fight against Paganism among His people.[123] It is a *temporary* Law, *and is dissoluble* and it concerns only the *sinners* who transgress the Law, and dwell in the *wilderness.*[124] On the other hand, Christ has freed us from all *the bonds of the second legislation* and those who obey God have to keep only the Law which *is the ten utterings and the judgement.*[125]

2. MARRIAGE IN CHRISTIANITY

The *Didascalia* offers special teaching on marriage and its holiness. Marriage was established by God for every human being,[126] and the *Didascalia* stands fast against the heretics who reject marriage and forbid men to marry: *Indeed, many of them* (heretics) *were teaching that a man should not take a wife, and were saying that if a man did not take a wife, this was holiness. And through holiness they glorified opinions of their heresies.*[127] *Therefore keep away from all heretics who follow not the Law and the prophets, and who do not only not obey Almighty God, but are His enemies; who keep away from meats, and forbid to marry, and believe not in the resurrection of the body.... Flee and keep away from them, therefore, that you may not perish with them.*[128]

122 *Didascalia*, 244-246.
123 Cf. *Didascalia*, 231; 247-265.
124 Cf. *Didascalia*, 18; 183; 197; 224; 243; 244; 249.
125 *Didascalia*, 243; 247-255; 231; 56; 18.
126 *Didascalia*, 22-24; 219-220.
127 *Didascalia*, 230.
128 *Didascalia*, 254-255.

The *Didascalia* rejects all kinds of sexual restrictions between married men and women; it allows them the freedom to fulfil the sexual duties of their married life according to their own will, arguing that in Christ everything is pure and holy for ever: *Be thus minded therefore concerning everyone, concerning those who observe issues and the intercourse of marriage; indeed, all these observances are foolish and harmful. For if, when a man shall have intercourse, or flux come out from him, he must be bathed, let him also wash his mattress--he will have this travail and unceasing vexation: he will be bathing and he will be washing his clothes and his mattress, and he will not be able to do anything else... On this account then do you approach without restraint to those who rest, and you shall not declare (them) unclean so also you shall not separate those (women) who are in the habit.* The *Didascalia* adds: *... a woman when she is in the way of women, and a man when an issue comes forth from him, and a man and his wife when they have conjugal intercourse and rise up one from another--let them assemble without restraint, without bathing, for they are clean. However, if a man should corrupt and defile a strange wife after baptism, or be polluted with a harlot, and rising up in her should wash in all the seas and bottomless pits and be bathed in all the rivers, he cannot be made clean.*[129]

129 *Didascalia*, 255-263.

THE ACTS OF THOMAS

INTRODUCTION

The *Acts of Thomas* is an ascetic work written in Syriac[130] about the early third century,[131] most probably in Edessa.[132] Whatever the course of the history of early Christianity in India may actually have been, however, the *Acts of Thomas* cannot be a true history, for the work's ascetic vocabulary and symbolism indicate its Mesopotamian origins. Furthermore, it does not seem to have been composed as a history of the early Church in India, but rather as a means of propagating an ascetic form of Christianity within the early eastern Syrian Church.[133] The claim that Judas Thomas preached Christianity in Ind

130 In spite of clear evidence that Syriac is the original language of the *Acts of Thomas*, so writers think this work was originally written in Greek. Those who think Syriac is t language of composition are: Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas*, 13; Mack, 'Syrische Lieder gnostichen Ursprungs', 27; Nöldeke, in Lipsius, (ed.), *Apokr. Apostelgesch.* 423-425; Burkitt, 'The Original Language', 280-290; 'Another Indication', 94-95; Connolly, 'The Original Language', 250; Preuschen, 'Thomasakten', 563; Devos, 'Actes de Thomas', 123; Peeters, 'Traductions et traducteurs', 255; *Le Tréfond oriental de l'hagiographie byzantine*, 24; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 66. Those who think Greek is the language of composition are: Wright, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* II, xii(iv); Harnack, *Die Chronologie der altchristl. Lit. bis Eusebius* II, 546(I); Bonnet, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, XXII; James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 364; Thilo, *Acta S. Thomae Apostoli;* Tischendorf, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, 132. I refer to the Syriac text of the *Acts of Thomas* published by Wright, *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles* I, and the English translation of Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas*, with its division into chapters.

131 There is no general agreement about the date of composition: Brock, 'Syrian Asceticism', 8: 'These Acts belong to the earliest group of the apocryphal acts of the apostles, and go back to the second century'; Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India*, 2: 'the last quarter of the second century A.D. or the first years of the third'; Murray, 'Mary, the Second Eve', 373: 'probably 3rd century'; Guillaumont, *Aux origines du Monachisme chrétien*, 218: 'le milieu du IIIe siècle'; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 67: 'It was probably composed in the first half of the third century'; Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 26: 'The beginning of the third century'; *ibid.* 33: 'we may say that the *Acts of Thomas* were written during a time in which we cannot yet speak about one established Church'; Wright, *Apocryphal Acts* II, XIV: 'not later than the fourth century'; Drijvers, 'Facts and problems', 169: 'The Acts of Thomas... were originally written in Syriac, most likely in the first half of the third century and in Edessa'; Baumstark and Tissot hold the same opinion, cf. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, 15; Tissot, 'Les actes de Thomas', 223f.

132 Many scholars consider Mesopotamian Christianity as the likely breeding ground of the *Acts of Thomas* and it seems probable that they were written in Edessa: Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 30; Burkitt, 'Original language', 288-289; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 66; Guillaumont, *Aux origines*, 218; Hayes, *L'Ecole d'Edesse*, 103-104; Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, 4ff, 45, 66; Devos, 'Le miracle posthume', 249-254; Drijvers, 'Facts and Problems', 169.

133 The author of the Syriac *Acts of Thomas* employs a richly developed ascetic vocabulary: *wild ass, snake, black man, desert, repentance, sleeping, purity*, etc. In addition, many scholars

cannot be completely rejected, but I would prefer to say that, although the *Acts of Thomas* may well have a historical basis in the missionary work of Judas Thomas in India during the first or second century,[134] the extant work cannot be considered an authentic account of that mission.

Strongly based on the Bible, the *Acts of Thomas* is the story of Judas Thomas, whose mission mirrors that of his Lord, Jesus Christ, who sent him to India.[135] He went to India to build a heavenly *palace*, the kingdom of God,[136] which would be constructed in a completely different manner from man's kingdom: *All buildings are built in summer; and thou* (Judas Thomas) *buildest in winter?*[137] *He spent his life in India building the palace of God, giving* (money) *to the poor, and teaching them the new God, and also healing the sick* (and) *driving out demons, and doing many things; and we think that he is a sorcerer; but his compassion and his healing, which was done without recompense, and his asceticism, and his piety, make* (us) *think of him either that he is a magus, or an Apostle of the new God.*[138] *The people of India saw our Lord in the likeness of Judas,*[139] even sometimes *considered him as God*[140] for he was sowing in them the *word of life*[141] and revealing God to them.[142] He was the *Twin of the Messiah and Apostle of the Most High.*[143]

confirm the ascetic nature of the *Acts of Thomas*, cf. Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 38-53; Burkitt, 'Original Language', 280; Duchesne, *Histoire Ancienne*, 513; Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 193-194, 205.

134 Brown, *Indian Christians*, 45-46, 65: 'The only certain conclusion which can be drawn from an examination of the St. Thomas tradition is that at any rate such a visit was physically possible. Malabar continued to be visited by traders from Alexandria by the Red Sea route until the fourth century. After that trade was again carried by the ships which came down the coast from south Arabia and the Persian Gulf. There were strong Christian and Jewish colonies in these places until the rise of Islam in the seventh century, and it is not unlikely that there were Persian Christians settling on the Malabar coast for trade throughout the early centuries. The evidence available seems to confirm this probability, and whether or not the Apostle himself ever came to south India, it seems certain that other Christians from east Syria who claimed a connexion with him did come to reinforce, if not found, the Malabar Church in the first three centuries'. Cf. Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity*, 2-6, 10; Dihle, 'Neues zur Thomas', 144-172.

135 Cf. *AT (= Acts of Thomas)*, 1-3.

136 Cf. *AT*, 17-22.

137 *AT*, 18-19.

138 *AT*, 20.

139 *AT*, 11.

140 Cf. *AT*, 8; 106.

141 Cf. *AT*, 34; 38; 42.

142 Cf. *AT*, 39; 45; 78.

143 *AT*, 39; cf. 69; 125; 150.>

A. THE OLD MAN

Men and women and children, youths and maidens, shun fornication and covetousness and the service of the demons; for under these three heads come all wickedness.[144]

1. FORNICATION

For fornication blinds the intellect, and darkens the eyes of the soul; it confuses the steps of the body, and changes its complexion, and makes it sick.[145] *Fornication is the head of all evils,*[146] *because it is the corrupt love, that has no shame* and he who commits it is *the companion of corruption* for his deed is a *work of deception.*[147] *Fornication* in the *Acts of Thomas* represents all unclea relations between man and woman, the results of the *old man.* These relatio reach their height of corruption in *filthy intercourse*, the completely false unio between man and woman.

2. LUSTFUL HUMANITY

The man of fornication is *hideous, and his body black, and his clothes filthy,* he dwells in darkness[148] and is truly sick because of his impurity.[149] He is also violent and aggressive and he subjects woman to his lusts through brutality.[150] This *black man* is identified with *evil* and his *black colour never changes because it is* (his) *nature,*[151] *the nature of the darkness which dwells in corrupted people.*[152] *Human comeliness is a deceiver* and those *who place their reliance* (on it) *are quickly brought to shame.*[153] The physical beauty of Eve attracts weak man and draws him towards fornication, jealousy, violence and murder.[154] This beauty was often presented in the *Acts of Thomas* as the way of fornication and corruption.[155] Moreover, Mygdonia, through her *ornaments, beauty, dress, name and dignity...* reduced weak men to slavery, and laid *heavy burdens* upon them.[156] Eve tended to corrupt man by her *lust*, but Adam also transgressed *the commandment of God*[157] and corrupted woman by his violent possession of her.[158] This transgression of each other[159] is the way of

144 *AT*, 28.
145 *AT*, 28.
146 *AT*, 84.
147 *AT*, 52.
148 Cf. *AT*, 55; 64.
149 Cf. *AT*, 12; 64.
150 Cf. *AT*, 63-64; 31.
151 *AT*, 31; 44.
152 Cf. *AT*, 28; 34; 108-111; 118.
153 *AT*, 66.
154 Cf. *AT*, 31.
155 Cf. *AT*, 5; 8; 31; 42-43.
156 Cf. *AT*, 82-83.
157 *AT*, 32.

fornication and the *nature* of Evil.[160] In the *Acts of Thomas*, Eve appears as the first stimulus for Adam's fall into fornication. This is an allusion to *Genesis* 3, where Eve brought death into the world by tempting Adam to sin. On the other hand, Eve is represented as more open to conversion to God;[161] she needs to hide herself from the transgressions of Adam in order to gain salvation.[162]

3. FILTHY INTERCOURSE

In the *Acts of Thomas*, corrupted humanity is represented as the *old man* whose acts are *filthy* because he is subject to darkness. Therefore, *intercourse* which is from God and an act of life[163] becomes *filthy* and an act of death; in this sense it is the work of the Evil One and not of God.[164] *Filthy intercourse is hateful before God more than all evil works*[165] *for it consists of unclean pleasures and fleshly deeds,*[166] *corruption, wantonness,*[167] *filthy lust,*[168] *and the unclean connexion in which there is eternal condemnation.*[169] *Those who commit it are subject to bitter sorrow,*[170] *tortures, torment, afflictions and retribution.*[171] In the *Acts of Thomas*, moreover, *filthy intercourse* was called *adultery*, when it was committed with virgins or those not yet married;[172] this is regarded as the most horrible act: *Whoever indulgeth in filthy intercourse, especially in that of adultery hath not life with this God whom I preach.*[173]

4. CORRUPTED MARRIAGE

Marriage[174] is mainly mentioned through the use of the word *wedding-feast.*[175] The marriage of lustful people is corrupt because its wedding-feast is based on *transitory joy(s)* of *eating, drinking, singing, dancing* and *women* playing the *flute,*[176] which the temporal and earthly[177] *nature enjoys*

158 Cf. *AT*, 64; 79.
159 Cf. AT, 55.
160 Cf. *AT*, 31; 44; 74-76; 6; 8.
161 Cf. *AT*, 8-9; 22-24; 87; 137; 140; 150.
162 *AT*, 64.
163 Cf. Intercourse below.
164 Cf. *AT*, 13; 31; 43; 51; 52.
165 *AT*, 58; 84.
166 *AT*, 117.
167 *AT*, 103.
168 *AT*, 13.
169 *AT*, 84.
170 *AT*, 12.
171 *AT*, 55-56.
172 Cf. *AT*, 51; 43; 55-56.
173 *AT*, 51.
174 *AT*, 55; 150.
175 *AT*, 4; 14.
176 *AT*, 4-5.
177 Cf. *AT*, 124.

and (at) *which the gods too are pleased.*[178] It is the marriage of the *filthy and unclean pleasures, fleshly deeds*[179] *and filthy lust.*[180] Mygdonia described her old marriage to her husband Karish, after her conversion, as the marriage of *the time of the beginning, of the temporal life* and *of transitory joy. That was the time which passeth away, the time of day and night. That was the marriage-feast of corruption, the groomsmen and bridesmaids who pass away. That* (union) *was founded upon the earth, where there is an unceasing press. That was a bridal-chamber which was taken down. That was a bed which was covered wit goodly clothes that decay,* (and the husband was the) *bridegroom who passe and is changed. That marriage-gift was money and clothes, which decay a pass away.*[181] This corrupted marriage was an act of the Evil One, *who spak with Eve, and through her made Adam transgress the commandment of God.* And as a result, the Evil One *dared, and cast down the just from the height, and corrupted them through the lust of woman; and they begat sons large of body, and (he) worked them in (his) will.*[182]

Marriage of man and woman without God is an evil act based on the lust of woman and the violence of men which produce wicked children.[183] Moreover, children of this corrupted marriage who are conceived by *filthy intercourse*[184] *were earthly fruits*[185] *of the fleshly* union of man and woman.[186] Adam and Eve had to *pay the penalty for* their sin,[187] *which was afflictions, heavy care of children,* and *sorrow.*[188] And for the sake of their vicious children, they became *oppressors and robbers and smiters of orphans and wrongers of widows, and* (they) *will be grievously tortured for their injuries.* Moreover, their children *cause many pains; for either the king falls upon them, or a demon lays hold of them, or paralysis befalls them. And they are healthy, they come to ill either by adultery, or theft, or fornication, or covetousness, or vainglory; and through these wickednesses* (they) *will be tortured by them.*[189] One may conclude that the marriage of the old man, the man of temporal and changeable life, represents the *deed of corruption, and the spoils of the wedding-feast that passes away.*[190]

178 *AT*, 96; 4.
179 *AT*, 117.
180 *AT*, 13.
181 *AT*, 124.
182 *AT*, 32.
183 *AT*, 79.
184 *AT*, 12.
185 *AT*, 61.
186 Cf. *AT*, 56.
187 *AT*, 79.
188 *AT*, 12.
189 *AT*, 12.
190 *AT*, 14.

5. DUALISM

People who commit *filthy* and *lascivious intercourse*[191] are dualists for they *appear in two forms* and they deceive others by their pleasures.[192] They *put on the clothing of lambs, whilst within they are ravening wolves... in whose mouth is one thing, and in their heart another.*[193] Moreover, they commit fornication during the *night* which is regarded as the time of dualists and dead people.[194] Therefore, their marriage was not one based on true unity because man and woman were separated from each other by their corruption.[195]

6. COVETOUSNESS

Covetousness puts the soul into agitation in the midst of the body, so that it akes what does not belong to it, and it is afraid lest, when it returns to its wners, it should be put to shame.[196] Covetousness means the desire for everything which gives a *temporary rest*[197] such as the *corruptible wealth that remaineth here, and possessions that perish on the earth, and garments that decay and beauty that becomes old and is disfigured, and the body, in which all these are included, and which becomes dust, and which all these support.*[198] All these earthly goods are in the world, and a *chastisement is appointed for it.*[199] They cause *transgressions and sins* and their *end* is the destruction of him who *possesseth* them.[200] People who are looking for temporal ownership *take pleasure in* (the) *distress* of others, and *what they possess will not suffice, but who will desire that all things should serve them, and* (yet) *be esteemed as disciples of the Messiah....*[201] Those people are dualists because they confess with their corrupted lives to the Messiah, and their dualism is the cause of their wickedness; they are in the state of hiding their inner darkness by a false façade of light.[202]

7. DEMONS

God placed the universe under the authority of *man*, who *might strive against it with the free will which Thou didst give him. But the free nature of man went astray, and he became subject of his fellow; and that (fellow) became an enemy*

191 *AT*, 43; cf. 51; 52.
192 Cf. *AT*, 43.
193 *AT*, 79, 67.
194 Cf. *AT*, 43; 46; 96.
195 Cf. *AT*, 79, 56.
196 *AT*, 28.
197 *AT*, 36.
198 *AT*, 37; 82-83; 130.
199 *AT*, 36.
200 Cf. *AT*, 66.
201 *AT*, 79.
202 Cf. *AT*, 79; 130.

of him; because he found that he had been unmindful of his free-will. And the enemy rejoiced that he had found an entrance into his fellow, and thought that he would be master over all the slaves. Yet the fall of *our human race* into *sins* began *from the first day* of our existence in this creation.[203] *As a result, the enemy is neither creation nor our free will; but, being attracted by the delights of creation,*[204] *our free will became weak, and the result of this weakness* is the *perdition* of our humanity in the world. This spirit is the Evil One, sin himself.[205]

In the *Acts of Thomas*, the whole of *creation* can be found in man's *body*, the body includes and supports everything that exists in the creation.[206] Yet *entrance* of the Evil One *into* man is by the body, and the fight of man agai the *creation* is the fight against his body;[207] hence the fight of the spirit an matter in him, and the victory of *creation* over *man*, is the victory of the *Lord of the world and its pleasures and of its wealth and of all its delights.*[208] The Devil himself, or the Evil One, seeks dominance of the material world over the spiritual world, brought about by bringing pressure to bear on the *weakness* of our *free will.* In fact, once the sinner is healed, the Evil One disappears and no longer exists in any meaningful way.

Judas Thomas describes the Devil: *O evil one that cannot be repressed! O enemy that art never at rest! O envious one who art never quiet! O hideous who strivest with the comely, that thou mayest subdue them under thee! O (thou) who hast many hideous shapes, and appearest as thou, but black colour never changes because it is thy nature! O crafty (one) and disturber of good works! O bitter tree the fruits of which are like unto it! O lying slanderer who strivest with those that are not thine! O deceit which, coiled up upon itself, rears itself with impudence and dares to assail those who are better than itself! O wickedness that creepeth like a serpent and crawleth, and entereth in, and aimeth at virtue...! Thou enemy of the servants of the Messiah.*[209] The Evil One comprises the *devils, spirits and demons.*[210] *He is corruption* and *darkness,*[211] and he is a dualist. By his darkness, he puts a veil of darkness over the eyes of those who obey him, and he causes them to stumble *by his work.*[212] Demons *come to destroy* and to cause *everlasting perdition,* and they take *pleasure in murder and*

203 *AT*, 34; cf. 70.
204 Cf. *AT*, 37; 70.
205 Cf. *AT*, 76; 34; 70.
206 Cf. *AT*, 37; 45; 94.
207 Cf. *AT*, 34.
208 *AT*, 148; cf. 70.
209 *AT*, 44.
210 *AT*, 43.
211 Cf. *AT*, 34; 44.
212 Cf. *AT*, 34; 74.

adultery, and in sacrifices and libations of wine on the altars.[213] The Evil One uses the *lust of woman* in order *to produce afresh evil servants that suit his nature, and then his slaves* are tortured and *smitten by (him).*[214] His dwelling-place is called the *abyss,*[215] *the land of error,* and *the sea of trouble.*[216] That is Sheol where he destroys himself *by (his) own hands* and *poison.*[217]

8. SNAKE

The *black snake*, full of lusts, violence, anger, and jealousy[218] is a representation of the demon,[219] as well as of the evil man who is seduced by the beauty of Eve.[220] In the *Acts of Thomas* snake, demon, and evil man are identified as one person.

9. PAGANISM

Balaam loved to gain from wrong-doing;[221] he *taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, that they might eat food sacrificed to idols, and practise immorality.*[222] Ishmael, who *grew and dwelt in the wilderness*[223] as a *wild ass of a man,*[224] represents the nations of slavery and fleshly lusts.[225] Thus, the wild asses are the sons of ignorance and slavery[226] and their religions are heathen, based on idols, and on *sacrifices and libations of wine on the altars*; they are under the influence of the Evil One.[227]

10. SHEOL

Sheol is the place of *pits,*[228] *the depths* of the earth[229] and *the abyss.*[230] It is what is below,[231] *the region of darkness,*[232] *Gehenna and Abbadon,*[233] *the land of error and the sea of trouble.*[234] *Sheol* is also *the place of sickness,* where the

213 *AT*, 76.
214 *AT*, 34; cf. 46; 42; 76-77.
215 *AT*, 45.
216 *AT*, 37.
217 *AT*, 33; cf. 46; 47; 74.
218 Cf. *AT*, 31.
219 Cf. *AT*, 44.
220 Cf. *AT*, 31.
221 *2Pet.* 2, 16; *Jude*, 1, 11.
222 *Rev.* 2, 14; *Nm.* 31, 16; 25, 1-2.
223 *Gen.* 22, 20.
224 *Gen.* 16, 11.
225 Cf. *Gal.* 4, 21-31.
226 *Job.* 11, 12; *Is.* 1, 3; 32, 14; *Dan.* 5, 21; *Jer.* 22, 19; *Ez.* 23, 20.
227 Cf. *AT*, 59; 79; *Gen.* 17, 20; 25, 12-16.
228 Cf. *AT*, 33; 55-56; 73.
229 Cf. *AT*, 10; 37; 84.
230 *AT*, 45.
231 Cf. *AT*, 10; 48; 55; 84.
232 *AT*, 156.
233 *AT*, 74.

poison of the *snake* descends and causes death for the corrupted people,[235] who *transgress the law of intercourse* and *have not preserved their virginity, and have given themselves up to the deed of shame.*[236] *In this unclean place* of the *evil spirits,*[237] the sinners are suffering[238] *from mockery, derision,* and *retribution,*[239] and the enemy[240] is consumed by its *smoke and fire* and the *stinking smell.*[241] In fact, Sheol is the dwelling place of the demons, *the black men,* whose *nature*--composed of ignorance, darkness, and violence--is the character of Sheol.[242]

11. SLEEPING

Sleep is an act of the *old man* who is corrupted and made sick by sin; those who sleep are dead and are truly the *children of darkness.*[243] In the *Acts of Thomas*, for example, the death which results from sin is equated with sleep,[244] and it is a demon who causes such sleep to his fellows who are smitten by his corruption and they live in continuous fear and sleep because of their worthless life.[245] Moreover, people of *terrible form,*[246] *hideous men* and *robbers*[247] go wandering during the *night to torture* people who are sleeping and to commit *filthy intercourse* with them.[248] Sleeping is clearly the antithesis of watchfulness which is the state of those who are risen from the dead.[249]

12. CONCLUSION: THE OLD TIME

In the *Acts of Thomas*, the *old man*, precedes the *new man*, and represents the degradation of our pure, *former nature*; he comes between the *first man* and the *new man.*[250] The *old man* is a product of the sinful *time* which preceded the *manifestation* of Christ in the hearts of His believers:[251] *Karish,* (Mygdonia said), *that time required its due, and is gone; and this time requireth its due. That time was the time of the beginning; this is the time of the end. That was the*

234 *AT*, 37.
235 Cf. *AT*, 33; 156.
236 *AT*, 55.
237 *AT*, 55; 138.
238 Cf. *AT*, 138.
239 *AT*, 55.
240 *AT*, 156.
241 *AT*, 46; 55; 138.
242 Cf. *AT*, 47; 55; 84; 48.
243 Cf. *AT*, 30; 33; 37; 46; 53; 64; 66; 79; 81.
244 *AT*, 66.
245 Cf. *AT*, 64; 73; 111.
246 *AT*, 43.
247 *AT*, 146.
248 Cf. *AT*, 43; 46; 96.
249 *AT*, 60; 66; 146; 109-111; 119; 153.
250 *AT*, 58; 126.
251 Cf. *AT*, 34; 70; 10; 39; 48; 59; 143; 153.

time of the temporal life, which passeth away, this is the time of the life everlasting. That was the time of transitory joy; this is the time of the eternal joy, which passeth not away. That was the time of day and night; this is the time of day without night...[252] The *old man*, the man of *earthly thoughts, fleshly works,*[253] *disease,*[254] and *ignorance,*[255] is *alien from the glorious God, because* (his) *works are alien from Him and hateful before Him* and done *without knowledge.*[256] He is the man of dualism, *of day and night*; and he is essentially a mixture of good and bad.[257]

B. HEALING-RESURRECTION

Healing and resurrection are closely connected in the *Acts of Thomas*. In early Syrian spirituality he who is healed is truly risen, for healing is liberation from the darkness of the world and resurrection is perfect victory over death. These are achieved through baptism which contains the mystery of death and resurrection.

1. THE PLACE OF HEALING

a. The Desert and its Highway

The desert in Syrian spirituality, as well as in the *Acts of Thomas*, is the place of sinners who are waiting in their sufferings for salvation. The *wild asses* in the *Acts of Thomas* represent those sinners of the desert who long for liberation from the slavery of sin. These people are *like irrational animals*[258] who *turned aside out of the way* of Balaam, *and went into the field.*[259] The desert is the place of battle with the demons who try to lead the *people astray in the desert*, to tempt them to *worship the calf*[260] and *idols.*[261] It is also the place of purification from the darkness of the *old man* and it is inhabited by the *beasts* who *cannot speak* because of their sins.[262] Thus, they are *some distance off the highway* of God, but near to the *chariot* of the Apostle which is the Church of God.[263] As it is used in Syrian spirituality, the word *highway* indicates the way of holiness and

252 *AT*, 124.
253 *AT*, 58; 126.
254 *AT*, 15.
255 *AT*, 59.
256 *AT*, 38; 58.
257 Cf. *AT*, 124; 109-111.
258 Cf. *AT*, 87; *2Pet.* 2, 12; *Hos.* 8, 9.
259 *AT*, 39-40; cf. *AT*, 69-70; *Nm.* 22, 23.
260 Cf. *AT*, 32; *Ex.* 15ff.
261 Cf. *AT*, 59.
262 Cf. *AT*, 87; 70.
263 Cf. *AT*, 69-70; 39. The 'Chariot' is mentioned in the *Odes of Solomon*, 38, 1 as a symbol for the church.

of knowledge of God among sinful people. The theme of the *highway* in the desert is very biblical. Syrian spirituality appears to have adopted Isaiah's interpretation: *And a highway shall be there* (in the wilderness), *and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not pass over it, and fools shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come upon it; they shall not be found there and the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy upon their heads....*[264] Similarly, according to *Didascalia*, Jesus Christ is the highway of God: *The churches formerly were 'deserts', in which there is now a highwa and the knowledge of the fear of God, (a way) wherein there is no erring, b new and manifest, (even) Jesus Christ and all His dispensation which was fro the beginning.*[265]

In the *Acts of Thomas*, the highway is the way of salvation and freedom which, the path by which sinners may repent and return to the Lord. The *wild asses*, however, remain behind the *chariot*. They are not yet sufficiently pure and so not yet ready to become the servants of God;[266] they remain in their *pasture* where they continue to fight against the lusts of the world.[267] In conclusion, it should be noted that the story of the *wild asses* in the *Acts of Thomas* is based on the story of Balaam and his ass,[268] and on the story of Ishmael.[269]

b. Prison

'And he took me away again, and showed me a dark cave, and a stinking smell was coming out of it. And he said to me: 'Look down and see, for this is the prison of those souls about which I said to thee, when the chastisement of each of them is finished, another cometh in its place; and there are some of them which are utterly consumed, and there are some of them which are handed over to other tortures.'[270] Prison appears as a *dark cave* in Sheol, where the tortures *of the sheep that have gone astray* are reaching their end.[271] They are the *prisoners* of Sheol[272] and *the children of darkness* who live in *darkness*.[273] They are looking for their salvation, and they are enduring the last moments of the torments of darkness, because their liberation is soon.[274] Finally, the prison

264 *Is.* 35, 8-10; cf. *Ps.* 84, 5.

265 *Didascalia*, 242; tr. 223. Theodoret of Cyrrhus spoke of Zeno the hermit as one following the highway of God: 'He (Zeno) perceived the vision of God, 'placing in his heart the highways' of God', *HR*, XII, 2; tr. 96.

266 Cf. *AT*, 39; 70; *Zech.* 9, 9; *Mt.* 21, 2; *Jn.* 12, 15.

267 Cf. *AT*, 70; *Jer.* 2, 24; 14, 6; *Job.* 24, 5.

268 Cf. *Num.* 22

269 Cf. *Gen.* 16, 2-4. 15-16; 21, 10-21; 25, 12-16.

270 *AT*, 57.

271 Cf. *AT*, 57.

272 Cf. *AT*, 10.

273 *AT*, 153.

is identified more precisely as *a dark room beneath his* (evil man) *dining room*; the prisoners, that is, are suffering the tortures of the fleshly lusts of evil people.[275]

2. PREPARATION

a. Conversion

God manifests Himself through signs and deeds in order to soften the hard heart of the sinner. Once he is converted, the sinner's faith, which is a personal nd an inner matter, is manifested as a rejection of the world of darkness to hich he had formerly been subjected, and a proclamation of God's glory. It is ne direct action of God Himself which effects this change in the heart of the sinner.[276]

b. Repentance

The repentance of the sinner towards God *in truth* and *with all* (his) *heart*[277] is the first act of conversion in order to prepare the way to God's kingdom.[278] Our sins are the *debts* of our life and repentance is the time for *the debt to be paid* through forgiveness.[279] Mygdonia is an example of repentance; *she is sitting on the ground, with sackcloth on and ashes cast upon her, and begging of the Lord that He would forgive her former sins, and that she might be delivered from the world speedily.*[280] Another example of repentance is found in those *wild asses* who *obeyed the Word, the sovereign of all,*[281] and accepted to *go under* (His) *pleasant yoke and under* (His) *victorious power.*[282] Yet, *only four* of them agreed to be *yoked*[283] and *tamed by the hands* of the Apostle of God,[284] who ordered them first to stay in the desert, to recover from their *weakness* and become *stronger* in the Lord. It seems that the number of the four asses may be a symbol for the universal conversion of the nations.[285]

274 Cf. *AT*, 151-153.
275 Cf. *AT*, 151-152.
276 Cf. *AT*, 8-9; 22-24; 33; 37-38; 41; 49; 54; 58-59; 69-75; 87-88; 135-137; 139-140; 150; 170.
277 *AT*, 54.
278 Cf. *AT*, 110-111, 43; 65.
279 *AT*, 29; *Mt.* 6, 12.
280 *AT*, 135.
281 *AT*, 70.
282 *AT*, 49; 70.
283 Cf. *AT*, 70.
284 Cf. *AT*, 87.
285 Cf. *AT*, 70; *Ez.* 1, 5ff.; 37, 9; *Jer.* 49, 36; *Dan.* 7, 2ff.

c. Poverty

Poverty is the emptiness of our heart once the world of the *old man* becomes void.[286] He who follows the Lord is called to leave all his *earthly* and *fleshly possessions*[287] which belong totally to the *old man* who lives in the kingdom of this transitory world.[288] Through this destitution, the penitent becomes truly *poor and needy, and a stranger, and despised and a prisoner, and hungry, and thirsty, and naked and bare-footed and weary for the sake* of the Lord.[289] Ye he who is poor is a mad person in the eyes of worldly people[290] because l becomes a *wanderer, despised and wretched above all men, without possessio or wealth.*[291] It is the Lord who is the *provision for (his) poverty,*[292] and his *tru wealth.*[293] Thus, poverty is his *glory*[294] and his way of freedom from the slavery of this world.[295]

d. Fasting

Through fasting, one breaks away from the sensual pleasures of earthly food, the food of corrupted people.[296] Judas Thomas refused to eat at the earthly wedding-feast,[297] and apparently understood fasting as a general break with the sensual world for he anointed *his head, his nostrils, his ears* and *his heart.*[298] Similarly, Mygdonia, after her conversion, refused to eat with her husband and this refusal to eat symbolises her complete rejection of the *old man*, the man of corruption.[299] As the demon inhabits the world of darkness, people who are smitten by him prepare the way for their liberation by fasting,[300] for *the service of the belly makes the soul dwell in care and sorrow, fearing lest it should come to want, and grasp at things that are far from it.*[301] Fasting also entails a complete break with *filthy intercourse* in favour of *chastity*[302] and a preparation for true *intercourse with God.* One may conclude that fasting, such as that of the

286 Cf. *AT*, 53; 61; 66; 99-100; 114-116; 144.
287 *AT*, 61; 66.
288 Cf. *AT*, 99-100; 114-116.
289 *AT*, 145.
290 Cf. *AT*, 135.
291 *AT*, 136.
292 *AT*, 60.
293 *AT*, 145.
294 *AT*, 139.
295 Cf. *AT*, 53; 82-85.
296 Cf. *AT*, 109; 32.
297 *AT*, 5.
298 *AT*, 5. Oil is used to strengthen the candidate before baptism.
299 Cf. *AT*, 90; 95.
300 Cf. *AT*, 73; 81.
301 *AT*, 2; cf. 126, 146.
302 *AT*, 150.

Lord from earthly food,[303] is a symbol of abstinence from the *old man*. In the *Acts of Thomas* fasting consists in the consumption of nothing more than bread, salt, and water from evening to evening.[304] This does not extend to Sunday,[305] and is not only required before healing, but after healing, for Judas Thomas *fasts much*.[306] Finally, Christ Himself, who is the nourisher of fasting people,[307] *gives to them the incorruptible food of the tree of life, and the draught (of the water) of life.*[308]

e. Stranger

Jesus, the knowledge of whom is denied in this country; Jesus, the report of whom is strange in this city; Jesus is a stranger among those men.[309] Jesus himself is the stranger in this world of darkness,[310] and His Apostle Thomas is a *stranger* too in the city of the earthly king,[311] because he is not immersed in its pleasures.[312] Thus, the stranger in the *Acts of Thomas* is clearly the antithesis of the *old man*.[313] God Himself manifests His *glory through a strange man*,[314] because he is not a *countryman* of the sinful people.[315] He sends him *to every country and every city*[316] in order to remove people who are in darkness *from corruption* and to sow *life* in them.[317] The *stranger* in the *Acts of Thomas* is the *Apostle* of God[318] who can open the doors of the prison [319] and make God known to all who are worthy of (Him).[320] All places which are liberated from darkness become *places for strangers*.[321]

303 Cf. *AT*, 86.
304 *AT*, 104; cf. 96.
305 *AT*, 29.
306 *AT*, 20.
307 *AT*, 39.
308 *AT*, 36; cf. 37; 94.
309 *AT*, 72.
310 Cf. *Jn.* 1, 5. 10-12.
311 Cf. *AT*, 4.
312 Cf. *AT*, 5.
313 Cf. *AT*, 100.
314 *AT*, 123; cf. 15; 72.
315 *AT*, 109.
316 *AT*, 72; cf. 123; 137.
317 *AT*, 15.
318 *AT*, 15.
319 *AT*, 119; 122; 151.
320 *AT*, 72.
321 *AT*, 33.

3. PERFORMANCE OF HEALING

a. The Healer

To Thee be glory, Jesus the Messiah, who hast given healing by Thy servant and Thy Apostle Judas.[322] The Healer *of the bodies of those who are tortured by the enemy*[323] is Jesus Christ who performs *healing by the hand of the Apostle Judas.*[324] He is the *stranger* who came to heal *the sick who were ill of grievous diseases and hideous torments, and the paralytics*[325] and to cause *all pains*[326] and *afflictions to go.*[327] He is truly *the healer of His creation, and of the sick because of His servants.*[328] The healer performs in order to destroy the demo *the disturber*,[329] and to efface his *footsteps*[330] from the *entire habitation men.*[331] His work is free because he *takes no fee from any man*[332] and he *hea the bodies with the souls, which shall never more be dissolved.*[333] People who are converted to Christ are involved in healing in order to obtain the *recovery* of their former *nature.*

b. Incarnation--Manhood

Jesus Christ *did put on the first man*,[334] who was made in all purity and perfection by God,[335] in order to heal the *sick* and great *bodies* of the *old man.*[336] The Evil One, who divided and corrupted the human being through the body of the *old man*, was destroyed by *the manhood* of Jesus Christ, *which was made new for us.*[337] The Evil One considered everything subject to him through the body, but he was *deceived* and cast *down into the abyss* when he saw God in the human body through His Son.[338] Thus the human body is nevermore subject to the Evil One or a way of corruption, ignorance and death,[339] but is the body of God and full of *humility, poverty* and *life.*[340] Thus this unity of divinity and

322 *AT*, 59.
323 *AT*, 42; cf. 37; 78; 81; 95.
324 *AT*, 34; cf. 42; 54; 95; 143; 150.
325 *AT*, 59.
326 *AT*, 143.
327 *AT*, 43; cf. 34.
328 *AT*, 143.
329 *AT*, 75.
330 *AT*, 77.
331 AT, 62; cf. 156.
332 *AT*, 95.
333 *AT*, 65.
334 *AT*, 10; i.e., the man of Paradise, cf. Theophilus of Antioch, II/25.
335 *AT*, 34.
336 Cf. *AT*, 37; 74; 78.
337 *AT*, 80.
338 Cf. *AT*, 45; 143; 70.
339 Cf *AT*, 70.
340 Cf. *AT*, 45; 48.

humanity, body and soul in Jesus Christ, becomes the only way of salvation for the dead people, who are dualist and subject to the Evil One. Moreover, Jesus Christ, who is God and Man in a perfect unity, is the unique *Healer* of *the bodies with the souls,*[341] and then whoever is healed puts on the body of Jesus which is the *first man* and our *new manhood.*[342] Finally, in the *Acts of Thomas*, the bodies of sinners were often considered animalistic because they lost their manhood through evil deeds. Once a sinner was converted to Christ and baptised in His name, however, he recovered his true manhood directly from God. One can say, therefore, that an animalistic body represents the state of the *old man*, and a human body that of the *new man.*

c. Expulsion of Demons

The power of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,[343] and *the name* of God which frightens the demons,[344] can drive out the Evil One from the *habitations of men.*[345] God performs healing through his *Apostle* who is *sent* by Him *for the healing of men who have need of the aid which is given them by (his) hands.*[346] That is, the *feeble* (man) *who is sick* needs healing.[347] The process of healing causes a battle between the demon and the Apostle, for it is in itself a confrontation between two powers; the power of darkness and the power of light, death and life, demon and God. But it ends in the victory of God over the Evil One, who is under God's authority.[348] In the event, the *nature* of the demon is *laid bare* before the *One God* and is destroyed by its own *poison* of corruption.[349] Judas Thomas used *violence* with the demon,[350] and his way to drive him out of the sick was *prayer* which chastises the Evil One and proclaims God's victory over him.[351] His prayer was often accompanied by the laying of his hands upon the sick,[352] and once, he used the sign of the cross.[353] On the other hand, the expulsion of the demon can cause a brief but strong agitation as the healed man resembles *a dead (man) without a word.*[354] In the *Acts of Thomas*, those *smitten by the demon*[355] are *dead* and always *lying* on the

341 *AT*, 95; cf. 156.
342 *AT*, 10; Cf. 34; 80.
343 *AT*, 143; cf. 53.
344 Cf. *AT*, 46.
345 *AT*, 77; cf. 46.
346 *AT*, 62; cf. 59.
347 *AT*, 150.
348 Cf. *AT*, 30-34; 42-46; 74-77.
349 Cf. *AT*, 33; 77.
350 *AT* 45.
351 Cf. *AT*, 43.
352 Cf. *AT*, 53; 54; 49; 67.
353 *AT*, 54.
354 *AT*, 77.

ground,[356] sleeping in their darkness. Liberation from demons is a sign of the conversion to Christ for the multitudes of sinners. Judas Thomas advised people to seek *bodily healing* with diffidence, for this ends with the complete dissolution of the body. They should rather concern themselves with the healing of their *souls* and *life everlasting*.[357] The expulsion of demons is regarded as the first step on the way to the complete healing of the *old man* in baptism.

d. Baptism

d 1. Meaning: The Perfect Healing

And he began to speak of baptism and said: 'This is the baptism of the remission of sins; this is the bringer forth of new man; this is the restorer of understandings; and the mingler of soul and body, and the establisher of the new man in the Trinity, and which becometh a participation in the remission of sin....'[358] Baptism is the complete purification of the *old man*, the *destruction of the enemy, and the healing of souls and bodies.*[359] It is *the sign of life*,[360] which puts an end to darkness, and is the dawn of eternal light.[361]

d 2. Candidate: the One

I and my daughter and my wife will henceforth live purely in one mind and in one love; and we beg that we may receive the sign from thy hands, and may become true servants unto our Lord, and may be reckoned among the number of His flock and His sheep.[362] He who is ready to be *one* in himself, married or celibate, is the true candidate for baptism. In fact, *the one* is drawn *nigh to* baptism *in love*[363] and he is *rejoicing with holy hymns*. His soul is *turned to God* and he is under God's will.[364] The unity of love is the way of the Lord's peace to *the brethren* who are preparing themselves to meet the Lord in baptism, and who still are unable to *see (Him), for till now they had not been baptised.*[365]

d 3. Performance of baptism

Baptism in the *Acts of Thomas* is called *the sign*. Oil and water are the two materials employed, and annointing usually precedes the immersion in the

355 *AT*, 34; cf. 81.
356 Cf. *AT*, 30; 33; 37; 46; 53; 75; 77; 79; 81.
357 *AT*, 78; cf. 156; *Jn.* 6, 26 ff.
358 *AT*, 132.
359 *AT*, 157; cf. 121.
360 *AT*, 150.
361 Cf. *AT*, 26; 27; 152.
362 *AT*, 131.
363 *AT*, 132.
364 Cf. *AT*, 26.
365 *AT*, 27; 121.

baptismal water. Baptism, moreover, is a trinitarian act of salvation performed by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; it is immediately followed by the Eucharist.

d 3.1. Oil

And he took the oil, and cast (it) on her (Narkia's) *head, and said: 'Holy oil, which was given to us for unction, and hidden mystery of the cross, which is seen through it--Thou, the straightener of crooked limbs, Thou our Lord Jesus, life and health and remission of sins,--let Thy power come and abide upon this oil, and let thy holiness dwell in it'. And he cast* (it) *upon the head of Mygdonia and said: 'Heal her of her old wounds, and wash away form her sores, and strengthen her weakness.'*[366] In the *Acts of Thomas*, oil is a symbol of the *hidden power that dwellest in the Messiah*[367] which *men may put on and conquer through* (it) *their enemies, when they have been cleansed from their former works.*[368] Also, the oil of purification from disease is *the oil of life*,[369] *for the healing of souls and bodies.*[370]

d 3.2. Water

Baptismal water is *given unto us by the Living Water* for our purification from the *old man.*[371] It is itself *the ocean-flood of the Messiah* which destroys the *nature* of Evil[372] because the *victorious power* of the Lord, the *Life-giver*, (His) *healing and* (His) *mercy abide* in it.[373] This *living water* of baptism, *blessed* and sanctified by the prayer of the *Apostle*, is a *sweet spring that never faileth, and clear fountain that is never polluted, in the region of thirst.*[374] Therefore the baptismal water should be kept *closed for seven days*, in order to protect its purity for the holy service.[375] Baptism involves total immersion in the baptismal water and the Apostle who ministers this service does so *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit of holiness.*[376]

d 3.3. The Trinity

Baptism is a divine act which establishes *the new man in the Trinity.*[377] It is the Trinity Himself who performs baptism, for *The living Father, the Father of*

366 *AT*, 121.
367 *AT*, 121.
368 *AT*, 157; cf. 5.
369 *AT*, 67.
370 *AT*, 157.
371 *AT*, 52; cf. 37.
372 *AT*, 31; cf. 140-141.
373 *AT*, 52.
374 *AT*, 39; cf. 37.
375 Cf. *AT*, 26; 49.
376 *AT*, 27; cf. 49; 121; 132; 157.
377 *AT*, 123.

all, as the Father of *light*[378] enlightens the baptized[379] and acts through the Son and the Holy Spirit.[380]

d 3.4. From Sheol to Heaven

Jesus Christ, the perfect manifestation of God,[381] enters those who are baptised and saves sinners from the slavery of the Evil One.[382] The darkness of water is lit by Christ[383] *and instantly the whole prison (is) bright as by day*; for Jesus our Illuminator is there, *and all those who were shut up there were asleep and only those who believed in our Lord were awake.*[384] Yet, the salvation the sinner cannot be achieved without the destruction of Sheol, the dwelli place of the dead: *Companion and help of the feeble.... Thou didst descend in Sheol with mighty power, and the dead saw thee and became alive, and the lord of the dead was not able to bear* (it), *and Thou didst ascend with great glory, and didst tread for them the path* (leading) *up on high, and in Thy footsteps all Thy redeemed followed; and Thou didst bring them into Thy fold, and mingle them with Thy sheep....*[385] The *Acts of Thomas* declares that Christ reached the summit of healing by His descent to the *uttermost end of Sheol, and* (He) *did open its gates, and bring out its prisoners, and did tread for them the path* (leading) *above by the nature of* (His) *Godhead.*[386] Thus, Sheol becomes the *blessed place*[387] where Christ performed His baptismal act of salvation.

e. Eucharist

The act of baptism is completed by the Eucharist of the Church, which fulfils the healing of the baptised man and establishes his new manhood in the perfection of Christ: *And when they were baptised and had put on their clothes,*[388] *the Apostle ordered his deacon to make ready the Eucharist; and he brought a bench*[389] *thither, and spread over it a linen cloth;*[390] *and he brought (and) placed upon it the bread*[391] *of the blessing*[392] *and the mingled cup of*

378 *AT*, 6-7; 45-46.
379 Cf. *AT*, 26; 27; 28; 34; 153.
380 Cf. *AT*, 39; 50.
381 Cf. *AT*, 10.
382 Cf. *AT*, 6-7; 39; 45; 53.
383 Cf. *AT*, 26-27.
384 *AT*, 153; cf. 119.
385 *AT*, 156.
386 *AT*, 10; cf. 151; 119.
387 *AT*, 48.
388 *AT*, 121; cf. 133.
389 The 'bench' is a table, cf. *AT*, 133.
390 Jesus Christ 'was wrapped in a linen cloth for us, let us be girt with (His) mighty strength, which cannot be overcome.' *AT*, 158.
391 The bread of the Eucharist is 'a loaf of bread'--the ordinary bread of the common people, cf. *AT*, 120.

wine.[393] Then the Apostle *spake a blessing over it and said: 'Thy holy Body, which was crucified for our sake, we eat, and Thy life-giving blood, which was shed for our sake, we drink. Let Thy Body be to us for life, and Thy blood for the remission of sins. For the gall which Thou drankest for us, let the bitterness of our enemy be taken away from us. And for Thy drinking vinegar for our sake let our weakness be strengthened....'*[394]

C. THE NEW MAN

The *new man* is a man renewed by baptism. The sacrament establishes him in the Trinity, and unites *soul* and *body* in God. He is truly *one* and risen to *life everlasting.*[395] Judas Thomas defines the life of the *new creatures, who are renewed through baptism,*[396] by saying: *Acquire purity, and take unto you temperance, and strive after humility; for by these three cardinal virtues is typified this Messiah, of whom I preach.*[397] These *three cardinal virtues* are evoked as opposites to the *three heads of wickedness* of the *old man.*[398]

1. HOLINESS

Blessed are ye holy for ye have not destroyed what was delivered unto you, but ye take it up on high with you, rejoicing.[399] *Holiness is the messenger of concord, which bringeth the tidings of peace,*[400] and it *maketh* (us) *enter into everlasting life, and by it are done all good works; for he who is not sanctified is unable to do anything good, because all the virtues are after this of Holiness.*[401] Those *cleansed from their former work* already *put on* the Lord and *conquer, through* (Him), *their enemies.*[402] *Holiness is the temple of God, and everyone who guardeth it, guardeth His temple, and the Messiah dwelleth in him.*[403] Holiness in the *Acts of Thomas* is the opposite of fornication. As *fornication* is *the head of all evils,*[404] so holiness is the head of all virtues[405] and *the chief of all good qualities.*[406] Fornication *is hateful before God more than all evil*

392 *AT*, 49.
393 *AT*, 120; cf. 133; 158. The 'mingled cup' refers to the wine which is mixed with water.
394 *AT*, 158.
395 Cf. *AT*, 121.
396 Cf. *AT*, 132; 131; 119; 54; 34.
397 *AT*, 132.
398 *AT*, 86.
399 *AT*, 94.
400 *AT*, 85.
401 *AT*, 85.
402 *AT*, 157.
403 *AT*, 86; cf. 94; 156.
404 *AT*, 84.
405 *AT*, 85.
406 *AT*, 139.

works,[407] and holiness *is chosen before God more than all good things.*[408] Holiness is seen as being *of God*; it *destroys evil* and *corruption*,[409] and he who is healed has to lead his new life in faith and *holiness.*[410] Thus holiness is the power which destroys the darkness of the *old man.*[411] He who is *holy* is *blessed, for to* (him) *is granted power to forgive sins* and he becomes like the Lord.[412]

2. TEMPERANCE

Temperance showeth us intercourse with God, and giveth eternal life and *setteth him who acquireth it free from daily cares.* It *sitteth at all times tranquility, because it doth nothing that is hideous*, and it *seeketh of rest, and a joy to all who acquire it, and exalteth those who are nigh to it.*[413] Temperanc in the *Acts of Thomas* is closely connected with physical fasting from earthly food:[414] *blessed are* those who are *temperate, for (they) shall be contented and rejoice in those spiritual things which pass not away and are not dissolved, and eaters of which hunger not.*[415] *Temperance is the rest of God*[416] and he who finds it is *delivered from sin*[417] *and the Messiah dwelleth in him.*[418]

3. HUMILITY

Humility is weighed with every (virtue) *and is heavy, and outweigheth* (them), *and gaineth the crown.*[419] *Humility hath subdued death, and brought him under power. Humility hath conquered enmity. Humility is the pleasant yoke, and fatigueth not those who bear it. Humility is concord and peace and joy and rest.*[420] Humility is the opposite of violence; it destroys the Evil One, who is violent.[421] The *blessed* humble *are children of light, worthy to inherit the kingdom*, and they *shall see the face of (the) Lord.*[422]

407 *AT*, 58; cf. 84.
408 *AT*, 85.
409 *AT*, 85; cf. 12; 156.
410 *AT*, 104.
411 Cf. *AT*, 12; 85; 97; 156.
412 *AT*, 94.
413 *AT*, 85.
414 Cf. *AT*, 86.
415 *AT*, 94.
416 *AT*, 86.
417 *AT*, 94.
418 *AT*, 86.
419 *AT*, 85.
420 *AT*, 86.
421 Cf. *AT*, 45; 47; 86; 94.
422 *AT*, 94.

4. THE ETERNAL WEDDING-FEAST

To the supper I have been invited and have come quickly, and have excused myself from the field and the plough and the wife; let me not be cast out from it, and let me not eat of it by reason of adjurations. To the wedding-feast I have been invited, and I have put on white garments; may I be worthy of it, and may my hands and feet not be bound, nor be put out into outer darkness. My lamp is bright with His light; let its Lord keep it until He leaves the banquet room and I receive it; (and) *may I not see it sputter by reason of its oil.*[423] In the *Acts of Thomas*, as well as in the Gospels,[424] the heavenly kingdom is seen as a *wedding-feast* to which everyone who is vigilant, pure, and holy is invited.[425] This heavenly banquet provides an antithesis to the earthly wedding-feast indulged in by lustful people.[426] Similarly, as the Evil One corrupts people by tempting them into impure marriage founded on a duality, the love of the flesh countering the love of God, so God manifests Himself to His people through heavenly marriage.

5. THE NEW MAN AND THE FIRST NATURE

The *old man*, who is *like purple* because of his sins, *becomes white*[427] through the act of healing and is truly risen in the Lord from the dead.[428] Eternal life abides in him[429] and he becomes *without care and without sorrow and without distress and dwells in rest for ever.*[430] He is the *new man* who *lives purely, in one mind and in one love.*[431] The *white, pure and free*,[432] however, are the *living children* of God[433] because they are *united in the kinship of* (God).[434] *They put off their old man with his deeds and put on the new man* [435] and *heavenly love* is sown in their heart by the Lord.[436] Thus they become a *cause of life to the whole* (world).[437] The *living children* are the *sons of God*[438] as well as the *children of light*;[439] they strip themselves of the *world* of Evil,

423 *AT*, 146.
424 Cf. *Mt.*, 22, 1-14.
425 Cf. *AT*, 146; 147; 131.
426 Cf. AT, 5-6; 62-64.
427 *AT*, 33; cf. *Is.* 1, 18.
428 Cf. *AT*, 10; 19; 21; 35; 54; 93; 96; 122.
429 Cf. *AT*, 6-7; 15; 34; 37; 39; 41; 42; 45; 50; 53; 86; 123; 135; 144; 150.
430 *AT*, 142; cf. 12; 34.
431 *AT*, 131.
432 *AT*, 43.
433 *AT* 12; 6-7.
434 *AT*, 61.
435 *AT*, 48; 58.
436 Cf. *AT*, 34.
437 *AT*, 42; cf. 61; 141.
438 *AT*, 34.
439 Cf. *AT*, 6-7; 12.

receiving the *world* of God[440] which is the heavenly *new world* that *God hath prepared from of old for those who love Him*, and *what eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor hath it entered into the heart of men (to conceive).*[441] This world of God is nothing else but our *former nature*[442] which He made pure from the beginning,[443] for after healing, *the new man is united to* (his) *former nature*[444] through his *new manhood* in Jesus Christ. As a result, the *new man*, who is none other than the purified *old man*, has really become one because *the internal* is made *external, and the external internal.*[445] This united man, therefore, is trul the man of eternal *light*[446] and *joy.*[447]

6. THE BRIDEGROOM

Thou art a bridegroom who passeth away and is changed; Jesus is the tr. bridegroom who endureth for ever and never dieth, and is never subject to corruption.[448] *Karish, He whom I love is more than all that thou possessest and all that thou hast, for all that thou hast is full of the earth and remaineth on the earth; but He whom I love is in heaven and He will take me up to heaven unto Himself. For thy wealth passeth away, and thy beauty becomes marred, and thy robes become old and decay and perish, and thou* (art left) *alone with thy trespasses and thy sins....*[449] Karish is in this context the *old man* of corruption and ignorance, the earthly bridegroom looking for lusts and transitory love.[450] Jesus the Messiah, by contrast, is the heavenly bridegroom, the *Beautiful* (One), the *Living* (One) *and Giver of life to those who believe in Him*, so that everything in this universe is one in Him.[451] He is *the heavenly king*, and he who accepts His offered *refuge* become *a king* in His heavenly kingdom.[452] *But, at first, a man cannot come near Him, when he is unclean and when his works are evil.*[453] One must be *pure* in order to be *united*[454] *to the true Husband.*[455] The conflict of the corruptible and the incorruptible *bridegroom*, the false and the true *husband* [456] is another manifestation of that between the *old man* and the *new*

440 Cf. *AT*, 21; 34.
441 *AT*, 36; cf. 18-22.
442 Cf. *AT*, 43; 81.
443 Cf. *AT*, 34; 108.
444 *AT*, 43; cf. 81.
445 *AT*, 147; cf. 130; 34; 70; 94.
446 Cf. *AT*, 130.
447 Cf. *AT*, 14.
448 *AT*, 124.
449 AT, 117.
450 Cf. *AT*, 13-15; 98; 117.
451 *AT*, 129.
452 Cf. *AT*, 136; 139; 108-113.
453 *AT*, 136.
454 Cf. *AT*, 98; 126.
455 *AT*, 14.

man--sinfulness and purity, death and life.[457] It may be regarded as the opposition of corrupted marriage, committed through the Evil One, and true marriage--marriage which gives life--attained through Jesus Christ.

7. INTERCOURSE

Into this torment are destined to come those souls which transgress the law, which change the union of intercourse that has been appointed by God; and other (souls) *are destined to come into this torment, which have not preserved their virginity, and have given themselves up to the deed of shame, and they shall come to this affliction, because they have transgressed the law of God....*[458] It is obvious that *intercourse* is considered *filthy* and a source of *corruption* when it is indulged in by the *old man* and when, therefore, it is not integrated with a love of God and with His true *love*.[459] On the other hand, *intercourse of the brethren and the Spirit of holiness* is a source of *everlasting life*,[460] because it does not *transgress the law, which changes the union of intercourse that has been appointed by God*.[461] This heavenly *intercourse with God*,[462] takes place with the heavenly Bridegroom, the Messiah, in the *new man* after Baptism.[463] One should not only understand *intercourse with God* as a spiritual, inner act cut off from the body. It is also at the heart of the act between man and woman, both bodily and spiritually. Their act of love is made according to *the law of God*,[464] *in one mind and in one love*;[465] thus it must not be indulged in with *harlots* and lustful men.[466]

In the *Acts of Thomas*, as more generally in early Syrian spirituality, there is no separation between Master and disciple, between Christ and His servant; rather, everything done by the disciple through God is completely pure, perfect, and an expression of unity. Intercourse can thus be a holy act of the *new man*, blessed by God because it is made in Christ's pure and new humanity.[467] Finally, one should point out that *virginity* seems only to concern those who are not yet married and who must therefore continue to preserve their virginity from fornication.[468] Nevertheless, because fornication and adultery can destroy the

456 Cf. *AT*, 13-16.
457 Cf. *AT*, 98; 117; 126; 129; 136.
458 *AT*, 55.
459 *AT*, 12; 13; 43; 51-52; 55-56; 61; 96; 103; 117; 139.
460 *AT*, 85; cf. 139.
461 *AT*, 55.
462 *AT*, 85; cf. 139.
463 *AT*, 158; cf. 12; 96-98; 103.
464 *AT*, 55.
465 *AT*, 131.
466 *AT*, 56.
467 Cf. *AT*, 43; 61; 85; 96-98; 131; 158.
468 Cf. *AT*, 55-58.

purity of sexual intercourse, virginity is in perfect harmony with *the union of intercourse* (which) *has been appointed by God* and, therefore, these two virtues complement each other.[469]

8. MARRIAGE OF UNITY

The heavenly marriage, which is an expression of unity with God, is set against the mundane ceremony.[470] Mygdonia explained to her husband, Karish, the difference between her old marriage with him and her marriage with Christ: *That marriage-feast thou seest, how it passed away and is gone; but th marriage-feast shall never pass away. That was the marriage-feast corruption; this is the marriage-feast of life everlasting. Those were groomsm and bridesmaids who pass away, these are groomsmen and bridesmaids wh abide for ever. That* (union) *was founded upon the earth, where there is an unceasing press; this is founded upon the bridge of fire, upon which is sprinkled grace. That was a bridal-chamber which was taken down, this is a bridal-chamber which remaineth for ever. That was a bed which was covered with goodly clothes that decay; this is a bed which is covered with love and faith and truth.*[471]

This conflict between Mygdonia and Karish is another example of the conflict between the *new man* and the *old man*; for one *betrothed to the true Husband* cannot have *intercourse with a husband* of fleshly desires, *the end whereof is bitter repentance.*[472] The *Lord*, who speaks through the mouth of His *Apostle*, advises people to *keep* (themselves) *purely unto God and* (they) *shall have living children, to whom not one of these blemishes and hurts cometh nigh; and* (they) *shall be without care and without grief and without sorrow; and* (they) *shall be hoping* (for the time) *when* (they) *shall see the true wedding-feast; and* (they) *shall be in it praisers* (of God), *and shall be numbered with those who enter into the bridal chamber.*[473] Those *united* to the *Lord Jesus*[474] are the *children of everlasting life*, who are called to sever themselves from those living in the darkness of the Evil One[475] because the *purity* of the *new man* cannot dwell in the *old man*. The married disciples of Christ have to leave partners that constitute the *fleshly wives* (of) *earthly lusts* and the *hideous men* (of) *adultery.*[476] This is not a rejection of all earthly marriages: married people who are both converted to the Lord and baptised in His name do not need

469 Cf. *AT*, 55.
470 Cf. *AT*, 12; 16; 89-99; 103; 124; 150.
471 *AT*, 124.
472 *AT*, 14; cf. 61; 103.
473 *AT*, 12; cf. 126.
474 *AT*, 98.
475 *AT*, 101.
476 Cf. *AT*, 61; 103; 117.

to divorce each other,[477] because their *bodies* have been purified by the Lord and *made worthy to be the dwelling-place of* (his) *spirit.*[478] Indeed, those *really risen in* (their) *soul... will neither take account of this life nor be afraid of death,* because they have *received... with perfect love* the Lord Christ.[479] The marriage of risen people produces *the heavenly fruits which* (are) *from above.*[480] In the *Acts of Thomas*, God's marriage is defined as the right of a man to *take one wife legally* and for a woman to take *one husband.*[481] Such marriage is considered holy and pure, especially after baptism,[482] and it does not exclude *intercourse* if the latter is enjoyed according to the *law of God.* In the *Acts of Thomas*, God is described as Father, Mother, and Son; he is also totally integrated, truly One in himself. For this reason, Christian marriage unites father, mother, and children into one holy unity because, in their faith, they are *united* with God.[483] Christian marriage is an act of total integrity because it is committed under the will of God[484] and based on His *heavenly love.*[485]

9. CONCLUSION

Unity of God in conjunction with the unity of male and female, humanity is an important theme in the *Acts of Thomas*;[486] such unity shapes the identity of the *new man* and is the source of his eternal life. Dualism is the way of death and the *old man.* In God who is *One, there is neither night nor day, and no darkness but light, and neither good nor bad; nor rich nor poor, nor male nor female, nor slaves nor freeman, nor any who are proud and uplifted over those who are humble.*[487] In the unity of God, man finds his salvation and becomes again *one* like God and one with God. This unity, the state of the *new man*, is brought about by the mystery of baptism which reunites the *old man* with his *first man*[488] who was originally pure, the state in which he was created by God. The Spirit-Mother,[489] moreover, who is also referred to as the *Queen of the East,*[490] is the *Mother*[491] *that broodeth over all created things.*[492] The life of man with

477 Cf. *AT*, 62-64; 131.
478 *AT*, 94; cf. 156.
479 *AT*, 93.
480 *AT*, 61; cf. 12; 126.
481 Cf. *AT*, 79; 56.
482 Cf. *AT*, 62; 131; 56; 150.
483 *AT*, 98.
484 Cf. *AT*, 55-58; 62-64; 131; 150.
485 *AT*, 6-7; cf. 15; 34; 35; 72; 78; 61; 128; 160; 167.
486 Cf. *AT*, 67; 34; 70; 67; 35; 144; 34; 70; 112; 29; 104; 70; 34; 34; 70; 34; 25; 25, 70; 132; 141; 131; 165; 34; 70.
487 *AT*, 129.
488 *AT*, 10.
489 Cf. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 214; Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 80, 143.
490 Cf. *AT*, 111: 60; 110: 41.

God, as it is summarised in *Hymn II*,[493] has three steps: 1) Humanity is created pure. We are heirs of God, the heavenly King and Queen;[494] 2) if we fall in the material world because of our weakness and we become subjugated to its power, we are truly dead.[495] 3) Yet the power of God will come down to save us from the death caused by our sins, and will bring humanity back to its original prelapsarian state.[496]

An understanding of the *Acts of Thomas* requires a knowledge of the mai elements of Syrian theology which form its spirituality. Syrian theology sha the characteristics which, according to the *Acts of Thomas*, shape the destiny man.[497] The essential points of Syrian theology are: 1) the belief in the vir and pure *first nature* of man; 2) the interpretation of sinful humanity as the *ol man* who is a result of the fall of Adam and Eve; and 3) the idea of the *new man* of Christ who completely recovers the *first nature* of man. All acts of the *old man* are either directly evil or ultimately dominated by death and the Evil One because the sin of Adam and Eve made humanity sick and weakened the presence of God in man. With Christ's incarnation and resurrection, humanity was healed of the diseases of the *old man* and recovered his former *nature*--his virginity and purity. From that moment, whatever he does in Christ is holy because he is the *new man*, re-born through the sufferings of the Cross and Christ's victory over death. The *Acts of Thomas* expresses this Syrian theology of salvation in its analysis of man's sin and his redemption through Christ. Like the Syrian theology, it insists that everything done in the *old man* is absolutely an act of the sinful man and cannot be accepted by a Christian. There is also evidence that the *Acts of Thomas* considered all actions of the *new man* as holy acts of Christ, manifestations of *the first nature* of man and so as actions of the risen man.[498] In conclusion, the *Acts of Thomas* has not been sufficiently understood within its specifically Syrian, theological context. It is now time to re-examine this important ascetic book, in order to understand its conception of man's salvation; by so doing, one may shed light on some very important elements of Syrian theology.

491 Cf. *AT*, 110: 41; 111: 60. The term 'Mother' has been preserved only in the Greek translation of the *Acts of Thomas*.

492 *AT*, 39.

493 *AT*, 108-113. This hymn is sometimes called the 'Hymn of the Soul'; I prefer Klijn's more neutral title, 'Hymn II'. Some scholars argue that this hymn does not originally belong to the *Acts of Thomas*. Cf. Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 273-281; Burkitt, 'Sarbōg, Shuruppak', 125; *Early Eastern Christianity*, 212-228.

494 Cf. *AT*, 108.

495 Cf. *AT*, 109; 34; 70.

496 Cf. *AT*, 110-113.

497 Cf. above the three steps of the *Hymn II*.

498 Cf. *AT*, 34; 35; 70; 104; 112; 131; 144; 165.

VIRGINITY AND CONTINENCE BEFORE APHRAHAT

1. MEANING AND ROLE

Before the fourth century, the theology of virginity had not yet been developed in the Syrian Church. It played a very minor role in the lives of Syrian Christians and was secondary to marriage. Few texts from the first three centuries mention the word *virginity* explicitly. Ignatius of Antioch considers the virginity of Mary one of the three mysteries: *And the virginity of Mary, and her giving birth, were hidden from the Prince of this world, as was also the death of the Lord. Three mysteries of a cry which were wrought in the stillness of God.*[499] In the *Odes of Solomon*, *the perfect virgin*, who seems to typify the Church of God, fights against *corruption* and *destruction*:

But a perfect virgin stood,
Proclaiming, and crying out, and saying,
Turn, you sons of men.
And you, their daughters, come,
And leave the ways of this corruption,
And draw near to me.
And I will enter into you,
And bring you out from destruction,
And make you wise in the ways of truth.
Do not be corrupted,
And do not perish.
Hear me and be delivered,
For I proclaim among you the grace of God;
And by me you will be delivered and become blessed:
I am your judge.
And those who have put me on will not be rejected,
But will obtain incorruption in the new world.
O my elect ones walk in me!
And I will make my ways known to them that seek me,
And cause them to trust in my name.
Hallelujah.[500]

499 Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 19, 1.

500 *Odes of Solomon*, 33, 5-13; the translation is from Sparks, *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, 722. Cf. also Bernard, *The Odes of Solomon*, 118 (5).

The *Acts of Thomas* refers to the *tortures which are prepared for virgins who have not kept their state of virginity*, (but) *because of their wanton lust, have brought shame upon their parents....*[501] The *Didascalia* advises the bishop to prepare the virgin for marriage: *Therefore, O bishop, take up their* (the Christians) *burden.... And when a virgin's time is come, give her to a man, to one of the brethren.*[502] Of the first importance is the belief that Jesus Christ was *truly born of a Virgin.*[503] We may conclude that in the Syrian Church of the first three centuries after Christ, virginity meant a time of preparation for marriage and a fight against sin but that it had not become the institutionalised practic which later helped to form the monastic way of life. Virginity signifying lifetin celibacy was no more than an individual commitment for a limited number c people, and the Syrian Church did not assign any special importance to those, such as Judas Thomas, who kept a celibacy dedicated to God.[504]

2. THE VIRGIN MARRIAGE

In the Syrian Church, virginity had a larger significance than mere genital continence. It was a concept of consummate purity in God. Holy marriage, blessed by God, did not abolish the purity of virginity, but rather preserved it as long as it was not an excuse for lust or exploitation. Neither did the children of holy marriage break the seal of purity, for children that issue from lives that mirror the life of God are born into eternal life. The *Odes of Solomon* speak of the Virgin who in all holiness and purity became a mother:

A cup of milk was offered to me,
And I drank in the sweetness of the kindness of the Lord.
The Son is the cup,
And he who was milked is the Father,
And the Holy Spirit milked him;
Because his breasts were full,
And it was not desirable that his milk should be emitted without reason;
The Holy Spirit opened her bosom,
And mixed the milk of the two breasts of the Father,
And gave the mixture to the world without their knowing;
And those who receive it are in the fulness of the right hand.
The womb of the Virgin embraced it,
And she conceived and bore;

501 *Acts of Thomas*, 56.
502 *Didascalia*, 177.
503 Ignatius of Antioch, *Smyr.* 1, 1; *Eph.* 18-19, 1; *Odes of Solomon*, 19, 6-10; *Didascalia*, 200.
504 *Acts of Thomas*, 146.

And the Virgin became a mother with great compassion;
And she was in labour, and bore a Son without feeling pain....
She bore as it were a man by the will of God....[505]

3. THE WIDOWS

The office of widows seems to have been an organised group within the Syrian Church during the first three centuries. Chapters XIV and XV of the *Didascalia* tell us something of this Syrian institution: *Appoint as a widow one who is not less than fifty years of age, who in some way, by reason of her years, remote from the reflection of having a second husband. But if you appoint one who is young to the office of a widow, and she does not endure widowhood because of her youth, and she become (a wife) to a man, she will bring a shame upon the glory of widowhood (for which) she shall have to give an account to God. First, because she has become (a wife) for two husbands; and again, because she promised to be a widow unto God, and was receiving (alms) as a widow, but did not abide in widowhood. But if there be one who is young, who has been a short time with her husband and her husband die, or for some other cause there be a separation, and she remains by herself alone, being in the honour of widowhood--she shall be blessed by God. For she resembles the widows of Sarepta of Sidon with whom the holy angel, the prophet of God, rested. Or again, she shall be like Annah, who praised the coming of Christ and there was a (good) testimony to her; and she shall be honoured because of her gift, honour (being given) her by men, and praise from God in heaven. But let not widows, those who are young, be appointed to the office of widows, yet let them be taken care of and helped in order that by cause of their being in need they may not desire to become (a wife) to a man for a second time, which would be an act of damage. This, indeed, you know--she who has had one husband may lawfully become (wife) for a second (but) beyond this she is (to be counted as) a harlot. On this account, support those who are young that they may continue in chastity unto God. And thus take care of them, O bishop.*[506]

In chapter XV the author describes the spiritual life of the widows: *It is required of every widow to be humble and quiet and gentle. And let her also be without wickedness and without anger. And let her not be talkative and not glamorous, and not advanced in tongue, and not a lover of strife. And when she sees anything that is hateful, or hears it, let her be as through she saw and heard it not. Indeed, a widow should care for nothing else except this, to pray for those who give,*[507] *and for the whole church.... It is not right for the widows to teach nor for a layman.... But let a widow know that she is the altar of God.*[508] *And let*

505 *Odes of Solomon*, 19, 1-10f.
506 *Didascalia*, 155-156.
507 Cf. also *Didascalia*, 157; 182; 185; 168.

her constantly sit at home, and let her not wander or run about among the houses of the faithful to receive. The altar of God, indeed, never wanders nor runs about anywhere, but is fixed in one place.... It is required of widows then to be chaste, and obedient to the bishops and deacons.... Bishop, *admonish now and rebuke those (widows) who have no discipline and again exhort and encourage and help forward those who conduct themselves rightly. And let widows stay away from curses, as they have been appointed to bless....*[509]

The widows are counted among the poor, whom the Church shou sustain,[510] and they are part of the hierarchy of the Church: *But the presbyte shall be to you in the likeness of the Apostles, and the orphans and the widow shall be reckoned by you in the likeness of the altar.*[511] Their number was counted during the liturgy of the church: *let twelve presbyters be known in the church, seven deacons and fourteen subdeacons; however, let those widows who sit first be thirteen. You are to count the places of the numbers, the authorities of the bishops, the seats of the presbyters, the continuance of the deacons, the admonitions of the readers, the blamelessness of the widows and all those things which are right for the foundation and confirmation of the church....*[512] The widows were entirely under the authority of the bishop, who was their visible leader.[513] Earlier, Ignatius of Antioch had considered widows as virgins: *I salute the families of my brethren with their wives and children, and the virgins who are called widows.*[514] This text once more confirms that the term *virgin* applies not to a mere technical state, but represents a much larger concept of purity in Christ that applies to all Christians, married and single.[515] The institution of the widows in the Syrian Church was derived from the New Testament:[516] *Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband; and she must be well attested for her good deeds, as one who*

508 Cf. also *Didascalia*, 104; 161.

509 *Didascalia*, 157-172.

510 *Didascalia*, 30; 55; 94; 97; 105; 177; 179; 180; 182-185; 156-157; *Acts of Thomas*, 19; 59; Ignatius of Antioch, *Smyr.* 6, 2; *Poly.* 4, 1.

511 *Didascalia*, 104.

512 *Didascalia*, 30-31.

513 *Didascalia*, 164-165; 170-172.

514 Ignatius of Antioch, *Smyr.* 13, 1; cf. also Camelot, *Ignace d'Antioche, Lettres*, 142.

515 In 1580, Eliano, the papal legate to the Maronite Church, accused the Maronites of heresy because they did not consider the state of marriage as inferior to that of virginity, and because they regarded married women as, in a sense, virgins, as long as they maintained a certain propriety in their marriage: '--L'état de marriage n'est pas inférieur à l'état de virginity. --Les femmes mariées sont inscrites au nombre des vierges, si elles ont observé l'honnêteté dans le marriage', Feghali, *Histoire du droit de l'Eglise Maronite* I, 67. This Maronite belief is consonant with the early Syrian tradition regarding marriage and virginity.

516 The early Syrian Christian tradition does not mention any other institution similar to that of the widows.

has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the feet of the saints, relieved the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way. But refuse to enrol younger widows; for when they grow wanton against Christ they desire to marry....[517]

4. THE CONTINENT

If any man can remain in continence (en hagneia) to the honour of the flesh f the Lord, let him do so without boasting. If he boast he is lost, and if it be ıade known except to the bishop, he is polluted.[518] Ignatius' text demonstrates ılearly that *continence* was a secret and individual commitment for *the honour of the flesh of the Lord.* In the first three centuries of the Syrian Church, however, it did not become a truly organised institution; its status was comparable with that of the widows.

5. CONCLUSION

Marriage in the early Syrian Church did not destroy virginity; rather virginity maintained the truly Christian marriage and was unspoilt by the purity of holy marriage partners. Devout celibacy as it emerged in the Ascetic movement of the fourth century was based on the spirituality of the Syrian church during the first three centuries, but quickly developed its own features within the different forms of the Monastic vocation. Early Syrian theology provided the Monastic movement with the principal elements of its own spiritual life, but did not offer the early Syrian monks any Monastic institutions. Before the fourth century there were no organised predecessors of the Monastic way of life to which celibates could belong. In the early Syrian church, devout celibacy was not yet a central tenet. It developed as such in the Syrian Orient from the fourth century onwards. Asceticism in the Syrian Orient, as elsewhere, expanded quickly into several ways of life, one of which was Monasticism. The Monastic understanding of devout celibacy helped to encourage a restricted, physical interpretation of the idea of virginity and to impose it on Christian theology. This limited uderstanding of virginity, derived principally from a specifically Monastic spirituality, should be considered in the context of other interpretations of the concept. Virginity appears to have been the word used to indicate a type of total purity in the early Syrian church. Despite its tendency to regard virginity as mere physical celibacy, however, the Syrian monastic tradition did not deviate entirely from the original, broad understanding of the term. Aphrahat, for example, along with other ascetic Syrian writers, clearly emphasises a cosmic understanding of Virginity as a total concept of purity.[519]

517 *1Tim.* 5, 9-16; Cf. Corwin, *St. Ignatius*, 50-51.

518 Ignatius of Antioch, *Poly.* 5, 2.

519 See Aphrahat in the next chapter.

II. APHRAHAT AND THE COVENANTERS

A. LIFE

1. PERSONALITY

Neither Aphrahat's exact name nor any details of his ministry in the Church are known. His precise whereabouts during his life, and the length of his life, a subjects for speculation along with his social identity and nationality. Aphrah himself is the main source of this confusion, for in his humility and modesty h wanted to keep himself from gaining a reputation and a following. When he wrote wrote to the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*, therefore, he deliberately refrained from making any reference to his private life: *And if anyone should say, 'These discourses were spoken by such a one'; let him carefully learn that to be careful to inquire about the speaker is not commanded of him. I also according to my insignificance have written these things, a man sprung from Adam, and fashioned by the hands of God, a disciple of the Holy Scriptures.*[1] Aphrahat's *Demonstrations* are the sole source of information on his spirituality, and are also, despite their shortcomings in this respect, the best available guide for details of his life.

2. TIME AND PLACE

Aphrahat was probably born sometime during the second half of the third century; he wrote his *Demonstrations* during the first half of the fourth century.[2] Considering the maturity that would be necessary for such a role, his ministry among the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* in the first half of the fourth century suggests a date of birth late in the third century. Aphrahat may have lived near Mosul, in a region which was called Adiabene in ancient times.[3] It is impossible to be definite, however, and it is probably safer to say merely that Aphrahat may have lived in any region of the Persian Empire.[4]

1 Aphrahat, 1048, 24-1049,4.

2 Gwynn, 'Aphrahat', 161, refers to his age: 'Aphrahat was a man of advanced age when he wrote of which there is no proof whatever, and must therefore have been born before the end of the third century--perhaps as early as 280'. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom*, 29, adds: 'We may date his life with all probability between about 270 and 345 or later'.

3 Cf. Burkitt, *Early Christianity*, 27; Wright, *Syriac Literature*, 33; Baarda, *The Gospel Quotations*, 7; Lagrange, *Critique textuelle*, 185; Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, 4, xi; Baker, 'Which came first', 293.

4 Cf. Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 31; Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia*, 43; Baarda, *The Gospel Quotations*, 7 says: '...the only thing that could be said is that Aphrahat, for some time or during most of his life, has lived in the region on the eastern bank of the river Tigris to the site of old Nineveh, north-east of modern Mosul; but if it has not any truth, he may have lived in any Syriac speaking area within the borders of the Persian territory'. And later, Baarda adds, p. 8: 'As to the exact place of our author within the borders of the Sassanid realm, a final decision does not seem possible as yet'.

3. PERSIA

According to tradition, Christianity was preached in the Persian Empire (under Parthian rule until 226) by Mari,[5] who had been ordained by Addai, the apostle of Edessa.[6] Although these traditions belong to the realm of legend rather than history,[7] it is likely that Christianity reached the Persian Empire by way of Edessa and Nisibis at an early date. Christianity was well established in Edessa by the end of the second century,[8] and the *Book of the Laws of the Countries*, by a disciple of Bardaisan (+222), confirms the presence of Christians in Parthia, Gilan, Kushan, Persia (Fars), Media, and Hatra.[9] These earliest Christian communities outside the Roman Empire must have been evangelized in Syriac, the Edessene dialect of Aramaic, which at an early date had become the literary language of Aramaic-speaking Christians both within the Roman Empire and beyond its eastern boundaries.[10]

In the second half of the third century, many Greek-speaking Christian captives from Syria were settled by Shapur I (241-72) in Persian territory.[11] This meant that in some areas two separate Christian communities existed side by side: one Syriac-speaking, the other Greek-speaking. We know from the Synod of Seleucia (410) that this situation lasted into the fifth century.[12] Very little is known for certain about the Syriac Church in the Persian Empire before the fourth century.[13] Aphrahat's writings, along with the *Acts of the Persian martyrs* under Shaphur II (339-79),[14] are the earliest extensive documents we have from

5 Ed. with Latin translation by Abbeloos, 'Acta Sancti Maris', 50-129. Fiey, *Jalons*, 40-44, finds evidence that the *Acts* contain some genuine traditions concerning the topography of Seleucia-Ctesiphon which must go back to c. 100 A.D.

6 The earliest witness to the legend of King Abgar the Black of Edessa's correspondence with Jesus is Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, I. 13. 1-10. The expanded form of the legend in Syriac, known as the *Teaching of Addai*, dates from the fifth century. The text has been re-edited, with English translation, by Howard as *The Teaching of Addai*.

7 Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity*, 11-18, suggested that Abgar the Black (V) represented a transference back into apostolic times of the supposed conversion of Abgar the Great (VIII; 177-212) at the end of the second century. Though many scholars have accepted Burkitt's view, Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy* I, denies that anything historical can be gleaned from the Abgar legend. For recent discussions, cf. Murray, *Symbols*, 40-8; and Drijvers, *East of Antioch*, II, VI; 'Abgarsage', 389-395.

8 For early Christianity in Edessa, cf. Duval, *Histoire politique*; Segal, *Edessa*; Drijvers, 'Edessa', 277-288.

9 *Liber Legum Regionum*, (ed. Nan) in *PSII*, 606-609.

10 Cf. Bardy, *La question des langues*, 22ff; Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 8.

11 For the various deportations, cf. Fiey, *Jalons*, 56-59.

12 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale*, 258.

13 Cf. Labourt, *Christianisme*, 9-17; Fiey, *Jalons*, 1-65; Young, *Patriarch, Shah and Caliph*, 3-21. Young wrongly accepts the historical accuracy of the information in the notorious Chronicle of Arbela.

14 Cf. Labourt, *Christianisme*, 51-82; Hoffmann, *Auszüge aus Syrischen Akten*.

the Persian Church.Aphrahat must have originated in the native Syriac-speaking Christian community, for he writes in pure and idiomatic Syriac.[15] By the time he was writing (mid-fourth century), Seleucia-Ctesiphon had emerged as the most important see in the Persian Church, and its bishop was later to be styled 'catholicos' or 'patriarch'.[16] Aphrahat belonged to the Mesopotamian Syriac Christian tradition which still remained largely unhellenized.[17] He was unaware of the theological debates which were raging in the Roman Empire.[18] More surprisingly, he only once mentions Mani,[19] whose new syncretistic religion was being propagated in both the Persian and the Roman Empires.[20] Aphrahat' silence on the controversial questions of theology could imply that he was not member of the clergy, and that his authority was that of a spiritual guide rath than an ordained minister. His *Demonstrations* are primarily concerned wit pastoral matters, and many of them are specifically addressed to the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*. His writings suggest that he himself lived a life rooted in the stillness, humility and love, that characterised the lives of other ascetics of the early Syrian Church.

4. THE NAME APHRAHAT

Aphrahat never mentions his name, identity, or place of origin. The name, Aphrahat, was given to him by later Syriac scholars who were seeking clues concerning his identity:

- Abu l'Hassan bar Bahlul (tenth century) refers to *Aphrahat who is the Persian Sage according to the tradition* in his Lexicon.[21]

15 On Aphrahat's style and method, cf. Gwynn, *Aphrahat*, 157f; Baarda, *The Gospel Quotations*, 8; Haefeli, *Stilmittel bei Afrahat*, 194f; Vööbus, 'Aphrahat', 152f; Murray, *Symbols*, 29ff; Maude, 'Rhythmic Patterns', 225-233; Connolly, 'The Early Syriac Creed', 202-223; Pass, 'The Creed of Aphraates', 267-284; Vööbus, 'Methodologisches', 25-32.

16 Fiey, *Jalons*, 66-84.

17 Aphrahat and Ephrem constitute the most important witnesses to this early tradition; cf. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 2-3.

18 By contrast, Ephrem, who lived in the Roman Empire, was well aware of the Arian controversy and its developments.

19 Aphrahat, 116, 13; in this paragraph he also mentions Valentinus and Marcion.

20 'A century before Aphrahat the bilingual Babylonian Mani, who dedicated a Persian book to Shapur I, was used to writing his works in a kind of 'Edessene' Syriac for reasons of propaganda. It was only through this form of Aramaic that he could reach Christian believers in Babylonia and Mesopotamia with his new 'living Gospel'', Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 8; cf. also Lieu, *Manichaeism*, 60-90; Bardy, *La question des langues*, 23f; Rosenthal, *Die Aramäistische Forschung*, 207-211; Widengren, *Mani und der Manichäismus*, 77f; Heinrichs, 'Mani and the Babylonian Baptists', 23-59. On Mani's presence, ministry and life in Babylonia, cf. especially *The Cologne Mani Codex*; Lieu, *Manichaeism*, 1-85.

21 Duval, *Lexicon Syriacum* I, 268; Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* III, 1, 257; Lagarde, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, 2; Wright, *Homilies of Aphraates*, 3.

- Eliya bar Shinaya (eleventh century) says that the twenty-third *Demonstration* was written *by the Persian Sage Aphrahat.*[22]

- Grigor bar 'Ebraya (thirteenth century) wrote in his *Ecclesiastical Chronicle* that *the Persian Sage became well known* (during the time of Papa, the bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon), *whose name was Pharhad, and of whom there existed a book of exhortation in Syriac language, and twenty-two epistles according to the letters of the alphabet.*[23]

- 'Abd Isho' bar Berika (+1318) wrote: *Aphrahat, the most blessed, the ersian Sage, had composed two volumes with homilies which were according the alphabet.*[24]

- A manuscript from 1364 introduces Demonstration XIII: with these words: *with the hand of God we are writing the Demonstration of the Cluster of the Sage Aphrahat who is the reverend Ya'qub of Mar Mattay....*[25]

Aphrahat is a Persian name from *Pharhad*, which is commonly given to many oriental Christians.[26] It cannot be said with any certainty that this was the name of our author, as it is only recorded in late tradition. In fact, when we use the name Aphrahat for the author of the *Demonstrations*, it is because modern scholarship follows the Church's traditional attribution.[27] Finally, it should be noted that the Aphrahat referred to by Theodoret of Cyrrhus is not the Aphrahat with whom we are concerned in this chapter. Theodoret's Aphrahat lived in a different place and time. The Aphrahat of the *Demonstrations* and the link with the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* does not feature in Theodoret's writings.

5. JACOB (Ya'qub)

Aphrahat was also known under the name of *Jacob (Ya'qub)*. Various sources have recorded this name: - A manuscript from 510 A.D. names the author of the *Demonstrations* as *Mar Ya'qub the Persian Sage.*[28]

22 Brooks, *Eliae Metropolitae* I, 63, 84; Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* III, 4, 38f; Parisot, *Demonstrations*, 10.

23 Abbeloos and Lamy, *Gregorii Barhebraei* I, 85f. II, 33f; Wright, *Homilies of Aphraates*, lf; Parisot, *Demonstrations*, xf; Forget, *De Vita*, 62; Sasse, *Prolegomena in Aphraatis*, 65.

24 Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* III, 85; Wright, *Homilies of Aphraates*, 1; Parisot, *Demonstrations*, xi; Forget, *De Vita*, 63f; Sasse, *Prolegomena in Aphraatis*, 6.

25 *Br. Libr. Or.* 1017; cf. Parisot, *Demonstrations*, lxxiii. The translation is from Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 5.

26 Wright, *Homilies of Aphraates*, 1; Sasse, *Prolegomena in Aphraatis*, 5, 8; Schwen, *Afrahat*, 6, 9-10; Parisot, *Demonstrations*, xiii, xvii, 'Aphraate ou Pharhad', 1459f; Maclean, 'Syrian Christians', 171a.

27 Cf. Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 6.

28 *Br. Libr. Add.* 17182, fol. 174a; cf. Parisot, *Aphraatis Sapientis* II, 149f.

- In Gennadius' Latin supplement to Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus*, this *Jacob* is identified as Jacob of Nisibis.[29]

- The Armenian translation of the *Demonstrations* identifies the author as *Jacob, bishop of Nisibis*.[30] This identification of Aphrahat with *Jacob of Nisibis* is not possible. In 338 A.D. *Jacob of Nisibis* was already dead while Aphrahat had only completed his first ten treatises. Moreover, Nisibis itself was within the Roman empire, while our author was in a Syriac-speaking area that was part of the Persian empire.[31]

Some scholars think that our author had two names, *Aphrahat* and *Jaco* Aphrahat may be his pagan name, for there are some hints in the *Demonstratic* that suggest he may have been a convert from Zoroastrianism.[32] *Jacob*, the could have been his Christian name.[33] This theory is a neat and convenien solution that synthesizes the conflicting data. As both names, *Aphrahat* and *Jacob*, emerged belatedly and vaguely, however, there is not enough evidence to recommend such a theory with any confidence.[34]

6. MAR MATTAY

The manuscript, *BL.Hay.Or.*1017, speaks about *the Sage Aphrahat who is the reverend Ya'qub of Mar Mattay.* This information is not relevant, as our author lived before the foundation of the monastery, which was built when Julian the Apostate was emperor (361-363).[35] Moreover, neither the life of Aphrahat nor his *Demonstrations* indicate any adherence to a monastic way of life.

29 Cf. Richardson, 'Gennadius', 61f; Wright, *The Homilies of Aphraates*, 4f; Parisot, *Demonstrations*, xxviiif.

30 Cf. Antonellus, *Sancti Patris Nostri Jacobi.* The Armenian has been reedited by Lafontaine in CSCO, Arm. 7-12.

31 Cf. Tisserant, 'Jacob de Nisibe', 294; Forget, *De vita*, 64ff; Krüger, 'Jakob von Nisibis', 165; Parisot, *Demonstrations*, XXff; Nau, 'Aphraate le Sage', 936; Nestle, 'Aphraates, der persische Weise', 611-612; Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 5; Gwynn, *Aphrahat*, 155.

32 In the *Demonstration*, XVI, Aphrahat says: 'On our account they do not worship idols, so that they will not be shamed by us, for we have abandoned idols and call lies the thing which our fathers left us', 781, 5-8; and in *Demonstration*, XIII, he adds: 'how much the more is it appropriate for us to worship and honour Jesus who turned our stubborn minds from all our worship of vain error and taught us to worship, serve, and work for one God, our Father and our maker', 801, 11-16; cf. also, Gwynn, *Aphrahat*, 157; Albert, 'Aphraates', 593; Parisot, *Aphraate ou Pharhad*, 1457; Funk, *Die Haggadischen Elemente*, 9; Haefeli, *Stilmittel*, 1; Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, 4; Evans, *Syriac New Testament*, I.

33 Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 31; Nestle, *Jakob von Nisibis*, 559; Bardenhewer, *Geschichte*, 333; Sasse,*Prolegomena in Aphraatis*, 6f; Gwynn, *Aphrahat*, 156; Haefeli, *Stilmittel*, 1; Parisot, *Aphrahat*, 1458; Duncan, *Baptism*, 2; Plessner, 'Afraates (Aphraates)' I, 932.

34 Cf. Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 4-5.

35 Cf. de Vries, 'Mar Mattai', 99; Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 7. 5; Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne* II, 350-353, 759-770.

7. FUNCTION AND MINISTRY

George, bishop of the Arabs (+724) was the first scholar interested in defining the function and ministry of Aphrahat.[36] In a letter written between 714 and 718 A.D. he tried to assess Aphrahat's personality through his *Demonstrations*.[37] Bishop George concluded negatively: he saw Aphrahat as a shadowy figure, whose career in the Church could scarcely be defined.[38] Bishop George also reminds his readers of the chronological gap between Aphrahat and Ephrem,[39] countering the idea, current at the time in certain quarters, that Aphrahat was a disciple of Ephrem. In fact, when Aphrahat wrote his *Demonstrations*, Ephrem was still a young man and had not yet become a distinguished figure in the Syrian Church.[40] George considers Aphrahat to be a disciple of the Scriptures,[41] no doubt following Aphrahat's own words; for Aphrahat identifies himself as a *disciple of the Holy Scriptures*,[42] and as someone whose life and writings were based on the Scriptures.[43] Bishop George also says that Aphrahat was a celibate Christian who led an ascetic life.[44] This contention is supported by evidence: all the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*, including Aphrahat, lived as single people, and some of them were separated from their partners. Furthermore, Bishop George claims that Aphrahat was a member of the clergy.[45] Many scholars follow the Bishop in believing that Aphrahat was a monk and a priest; some go even further, also suggesting that he was a bishop,[46]

36 On Bishop George's life and work, cf. Ryssel, *Georg des Araberbischofs*; Wright, *A Short History*, 156ff; Connolly and Codrington, *Two Commentaries on the Jacobite Liturgy*, 11-15; Gwynn, *Aphrahat*, 154 f; Baarda*Gospel Quotations*, 3.

37 Cf. Lagarde, *Analecta Syriaca*, 108-134; Wright, *Homilies of Aphrahat*, 19-37; Forget, *De Vita*, 8-55; Bert, *Aphrahat*, XXXVii-Li; Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 257.

38 Cf. Lagarde, *Analecta*, 108ff.

39 Cf. Lagarde, *Analecta*, 117.

40 For details cf. Parisot, *Demonstrationes*, xli-lxv; Forget, *De Vita*, 227-314; Schwen, *Afrahat*, 29-141; Duncan, *Baptism, passim*; Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gottheit, passim*; Baarda, *Gsopel Quotations*, 2. Gwynn, *Aphrahat*, 161 says: 'The Demonstrations are earlier by some years (the first ten by thirteen years, the remainder by five or six) than the earliest of Ephraim's writings, which can be dated with certainty (namely, the first Nisibene Hym, which belongs to 350)'.

41 Lagarde, *Analecta*, 109f.

42 Aphrahat, 1049, 3-4.

43 Aphrahat, 653, 14-24; 620, 14-15; 464, 23-24; 1045, 17-20; 469, 23; 512, 3; 520, 6; 4, 21; 72, 1-10; 137, 19 f; 140, 1f; 8,18; 84, 25; 1045-1048. See also some important studies on Aphrahat and the Bible: Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*; Bewer, 'A Collation of the Gospel Text', 110-123; Funk, *Die haggadischen Elemente*, 65f; Burkitt, 'The Syriac Psalter', 286-290; Vööbus, *Peschitta und Targum*, 105ff; Neusner, *Aphrahat*, 195; Kerschensteiner, 'Beobachtungen zum altsyrischen Actatext', 69-71; Schwen, *Afrahat*, 45ff.

44 Cf. Lagarde, *Analecta*, 109f.

45 Cf. Lagarde, *Analecta*, 110, 114.

46 Cf. Gwynn, *Aphrahat*, 157f; Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity*, 81, *Early Christianity*, 27;

an appropriate rank for the author of *Demonstration* XIV. The problem posed by *Demonstration* XIV, however, is not yet resolved. It is believed by some that the 'dear and beloved brethren' may be equated with 'the Bishops, Priests and Deacons... and all the people of God who are in Seleucia and Ctesiphon' and that this indicates that the *Demonstration* was composed by someone who held the rank of bishop.[47] Some scholars even argue that *Demonstration* XIV was written by someone who spoke from a position of acknowledged authority, authority perhaps bestowed on him by the synod of bishops.[48] The main problem *Demonstration* XIV is the interpretation of the translation of the first few lir *We being gathered together have taken counsel to write this Epistle to brethren... the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, and the whole Church*, may read so as to make the 'Bishops, Priests, etc.' either the 'we' who write,--or, th 'brethren' who are written to.[49] A further problem in *Demonstration* XIV is the date of composition: could it have been written before 329?[50]

Despite the intensity of the dispute over the possible reference to Aphrahat's formal position in *Demonstration* XIV, as yet there is no clear evidence that Aphrahat was a cleric. Many scholars, it seems, have failed to distinguish between the ministry of a bishop or a priest, and that of spiritual father, or a spiritual leader of an ascetic group. In the Syrian Church, the spiritual father or the head of an ascetic group within his ascetic community, played a spiritual role comparable to that of a bishop within his diocese. The Syrian Church, moreover, contains no record of any cleric who hid his sacerdotal dignity from his flock.[51] Why should it be thought that Aphrahat adopted an exceptional course, suppressing his clerical identity and/or keeping his flock in ignorance of his episcopal status? My own view is that Aphrahat, the Persian Sage who wrote the twenty-three Demonstrations, was a lay Christian ascetic celibate, and a student

Wright, *Syriac Literature*, 33 & *Homilies*, 8f. 21, *Short History*, 33; Forget, *De vita*, 87-103; Nestle, *Aphraates*, 611-612; Maclean, *Syrian Christians*, 170; Parisot, *Aphraate*, 1457; Plessner, *Afraates*, 932; Neusner, *Aphrahat*, 4; Ortiz de Urbina, *Die Gottheit*, 20, 'Aphraates', 687f.

47 Cf. Gwynn, *Aphrahat*, 157.

48 Cf. Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 6; Fiey, *Jalons pour une histoire*, 74.

49 Gwynn, *Aphrahat*, 157. See also Wright, *Aphraatis*, 8-9; Forget, *De vita*, 82ff; Parisot, *Aphraatis*, XIX.

50 Cf. Fiey, Jalons pour une histoire, 74f; 'Notule de litérature syriaque: La Demonstration XIV d'Aphrahate', 449-454. Fiey also believes that Mar Papa, the bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, is the author of *Demonstration* XIV; Murray, *Symbols*, 29 disagrees with him over the question of Aphrahat's authorship of *Demonstration* XIV. Nedungatt is of Murray's opinion; cf. Nedungatt, 'The Authenticity', 62-88.

51 Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, 11f; and Theophilus of Antioch, 31f. The *Didascalia* is especially clear on the high reputations of the bishops among their flocks: chapters 4-12; 18-19. See also *Didache*, 15; Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *HR*, IV, 9; XIII, 3; 16; 18; XIV, 1; XXIV, 3-4; XXVIII, 1.

of the Bible. He was not a cleric, but only the spiritual leader of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* group. His humility, his manner of life, his correction of the mistakes of his brothers and sisters in Christ, his interpretation of the Bible, his words of remembrance for the sinners and the just, and all the writings directly addressed to the flock of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* clearly demonstrate that Aphrahat was their spiritual leader.

8. DEMONSTRATIONS: DATES

Aphrahat's *Demonstrations* are preserved in old Syriac manuscripts of the fth and sixth centuries.[52] The first ten were written in 337 A.D. the following velve in 344 A.D. and the twenty-third, *On the Grape Cluster*, in 345 A.D.[53]

9. THEOLOGY

Aphrahat was one of the most important theologians of the early Syrian Church. His *Demonstrations* illuminate the early life of the Syrian Christians during the fourth century, and help us to understand the spirituality of the Syrian Church under the Persian empire.[54] His ascetic theology was influenced by the teachings of the Old Testament, for the life of virginity of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* was not solely based upon the New Testament.[55] The large place given to the Old Testament in his work, however, does not mean he was educated in a Rabbinic school, for there are no signs of such influence in his teaching.[56] The theology of Aphrahat was primarily concerned with the guidance of the ascetic life, and it constitutes the first major document on asceticism in the Syrian Orient. Aphrahat is unique within Syrian theology in his treatment of asceticism.[57]

52 Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 173: 'The earliest codex *Ms Br. Mus. Add.* 17, 182 which contains the first ten treatises is written in 473/4 A.D. The second part of the same codex with the rest of his treatises was written in 511/12. The next earliest codex *Add.* 14, 619, belongs to the 6th century'.

53 Aphrahat, 1044 (cf. 193, 464, 725); II, 149. See further details on the history of the *Demonstrations* in: Gwynn, *Aphrahat*, 153-157, 161; Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity*, 81; Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 1-2.

54 Cf. Gwynn, *Aphrahat*, 161; Burkitt, *Early Christianity*, 27.

55 Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, 5 notes that Aphrahat rarely quoted the New Testament.

56 On Aphrahat and Judaism, cf. St. Kazan, 'Isaac of Antioch's Homily', 89-95; Richter, 'Ueber die älteste Auseinandersetzung', 101-114; Sasse, Prolegomena, 11, 16; Schwen, *Afrahat*, 63ff; Ginzberg, 'Aphraates', 663-665; Funk, *Die haggadischen Element*, 10-16; Gavin, *Aphraates and the Jews*; Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism*, 10f. 123-149, 154-157, 188, 194-196, 244; *A History of the Jews in Babylonia* III; Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 8.

57 Cf. Burkitt, *Early Christianity*, 31-46; 'Aphraates', 10-15; Labourt, *Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, 32-39; Murray, *Symbols*, 70-73; 97-101; 341-347; 8-29; Haushern, 'Aphrahat', 746-752; Chavanis, *Les Lettres d'Afrahat*; Hudal, 'Zur Christologie bei Aphraates Syrus', 477-487; Plooij, 'Der Descensus ad inferos', 212-231; See an excellent bibliography on Aphrahat in Baarda, *Gospel Quotations*, 371-390.

10. THE BNAY AND THE BNAT QYAMA

The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* are the most important figures mentioned in Aphrahat's *Demonstrations.* They were not a monastic community, nor a clerical institution, but an ascetic group within the Syrian Church. Their vocation was to a life of virginity and holiness; they pledged themselves to fight against the sin of Adam, whose sting was still felt in their lives. The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* were a natural continuation of early Syrian asceticism before Aphrahat. They were in harmony with the spirituality of their Church and did not constitute a body independent from the rest of Christian society. They were a lay Christia ascetic institution, integrated into the daily life of their society, who based the lives on the Bible and on devotion to Christ. As regards geography, the *Bnay* a the *Bnat Qyama* lived in Mesopotamia in the same region as Aphrahat. They d not appear in any source book for the history of the Syrian Church before the fourth century.

B. THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE BNAY AND THE BNAT QYAMA.

1. DEMONSTRATION VI: A RULE OF LIFE?

Some scholars consider Aphrahat's sixth *Demonstration* as the rule or way of life of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama.*[58] I disagree with this view, for I do not believe they had a separate rule or independent discipline; instead they consistently followed the spirituality of their Church.[59] The following enumeration of topics contained in *Demonstration* VI, shows that Aphrahat covered every aspect of early Syriac spirituality:[60]

- *Let us now awake from our sleep..., that when He comes He may find us in watchfulness.*[61]

- *And lift up both our hearts and hands to God towards heaven.*[62]

58 Cf. Nedungatt, 'The Covenanters', 425-428.

59 Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 201, says: 'The treatise written on the benai qeiama, however, disappoints the student who approaches this document expecting to find some specific information about the ways of the life of this institution'.

60 I have used the Syriac text of Aphrahat's *Demonstrations* published by Parisot, *Aphraatis Sapientis Persae Demonstrationes*, PSI, PSII; in place of the chapter division of the Latin translation, I have used the numbering of the Syriac text by columns and lines. Thus quotations from Aphrahat's text will be indicated as, for example, Aphrahat, 825, 18 (col. 825, line 18). In the main, three translations have been followed: Gwynn, *Aphrahat, Dems.* 1,5,6,8,10,17,21,22; Neusner, *Aphrahat, Dems.* 11,12,13,15,16,17,18,19,21; and Brock, *Dems.* 7,18,23,(52-61).

61 Aphrahat, 240,2-3, 5-6; 244,5-6; 245,24-25; 256,17-18; 268,8ff; 296,15-19; 304,1-6,23; cf. *Rom.* 13,11; *Lk.* 12,37; *1Thess.* 4,16; 5,6; Ignatius of Antioch, *Rom.* 4,2-3; *Acts of Thomas*, 121; 122; 142; 43; 73; 60; 66; 146; 153; 154; 158; *Odes of Solomon*, 8,2-3; 3,11; *Didascalia*, 82-83; 154; 160; 194; 196; 207; 215; 261-263; 265; 53; 59; 214; 218; 222; 152-153.

- Let us observe the appointed time of the glorious Bridegroom, that we may enter with Him into His bride-chamber. Let us prepare oil for our lamps that we may go forth to meet Him with joy. Let us make ready provision for our abiding-place, for the way is narrow and strait..., and put on wedding garments.[63]

- Let us trade with the silver that we have received, that we may be called diligent servants.[64]

- Let us be constant in prayer.[65]

- Let us put away and cast from us all uncleanness... Let us cleanse our hearts from iniquity, that we may see the Lofty One in His honour.[66]

- Let us be merciful, as it is written, that God may have mercy upon us.[67]

- Let there be peace among us,[68]

- that we may be called the brethren of Christ.[69]

- Let us hunger for righteousness, that we may be satisfied from the table of His Kingdom.[70]

62 Aphrahat, 240-3-4; cf. *Deut.* 32,40; *Neh.* 8,6; *Ps.* 25,1; 28,2; 63,4; 86,4; 119,48; 134,2; 143,8; *Lam.* 2,19; 3,41; *1Tim.* 2,8; *Odes of Solomon*, 27,1-3; 35,7; 37,1-2; 21,1; 18,1.

63 Aphrahat, 240,6-9; 248,1-8; 249,7-10; 252,7-18; 253,5-9; 269,7-10; 272,14-19; 265,19-24; 268,8-11; 241,3-4,7,21f; cf. *Mt.* 25,1-13; *2Cor.* 11,2; *Odes of Solomon*, 42,8-9; 38, 12; *Didascalia*, 23; 103; *Acts of Thomas*, 6-7; 11-16; 124; 129.

64 Aphrahat, 240,13-14; 244,13-20; 248,12-15; 252,1-3; cf. *Mt.* 25,14-30; Ignatius of Antioch, *Mag.* 13,1; *Poly.* 6,2; 7,3; *Didascalia*, 153-154; 162; 171; *Didache*, 12,3-5; *Odes of Solomon*, 8,18-20; 11,20; 37,3.

65 Aphrahat, 240,14; 241,21; 244,11-12; 256,18; 272,26; 304,22-23; 312,19-20; cf. *Eph.* 6,18; *1Thess.* 5,17; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 10,1; *Phil.* 5,1; 8,2; *Poly.* 1,3; *Didache* 8,2; *Didascalia*, 163; 206; 209; 214-215; *Odes of Solomon*, 8; 22; 26; *Acts of Thomas*, 5; 6-7; 12; 95.

66 Aphrahat, 240,11-12,15-16; 245, 21-24; 248,16-17; 249,12-14; 252,7-18; cf. *Mt.* 13,7, 24-30; *Is.* 33,17; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 10,3; *Tral.* 7,2; *Rom. Intr*; *Phil.* 3,1; Theophilus of Antioch, I,2; I,7; II/26; III/13; *Acts of Thomas*, 85; 86; 104; 156; 157; *Didascalia*, 28/2; 29/4; 53; 61; 201; 240; 242.

67 Aphrahat, 17; 140; cf. *Mt.* 5,7; *Lk.* 6,36; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 12,1; *Rom. Intr*; *Phil. Intr*; *Smyr. Intr*; *Didache*, 3,8; *Didascalia*, 36; 53; 54; *Odes of Solomon*, 7,5,10; 21,1-2; 42,15.

68 Aphrahat, 240, 18; 252, 4-5; 253, 12; 273, 23-25; cf. *1Thess.* 5, 13; *Rom.* 12, 18; *2Co.* 13, 11; Ignatius of Antioch, *Tral. Intr.*; *Poly.* 7,1; *Odes of Solomon*, 9,6; 11,3; 35, 1-4; 36,8; *Didache*, 4,3; *Acts of Thomas*, 70; *Didascalia*, 36; 53; 80; 84; 128; 140-142.

69 Aphrahat, 240,19; 260,13; 265,3; 312,7; cf. *Mt.* 28, 10; *Jn.* 20,17; 21,23; *Acts* 1,15,16; 15,13; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 16,1; Rom. 6,2; *Phil.* 3,3; 5,1; 11,2; 12,1; 13,1; *Poly.* 5,1; *Didascalia*, 32; 38; 39; 98; 133; 147; 129; 165; 177; 183; 186; 190; 191; 198; 202; 211; 217; 209; 216; 252; *Acts of Thomas*, 168.

70 Aphrahat, 241,1-2; cf. *Mt.* 5,6; *Lk.* 22,30; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 1,1; *Mag.* 9,2; *Didache*, 3,9; Theophilus of Antioch, II/28; III/13; *Didascalia*, 65; 113; 158; 172; 180-181; 184; 198; 248; 255.

- *Let us be the salt of truth,*[71]

- *that we may not become food for the serpent.*[72]

- *Let us found our building on the rock, that it may not be shaken by the winds and waves.*[73]

- *Let us be vessels unto honour that we may be required by the Lord for His use.*

- *He needs nothing from us, but we should adorn our temples for Him; the when the time is accomplished and He goes to His Father, He may give thanl to Him because of us, because we have honoured Him.*[74]

- *Let us sell all our possessions, and buy for ourselves the pearl, that we may be rich. Let us lay up our treasures in heaven, that when we come we may open them and have pleasure in them.*[75]

- *Let us visit our Lord in the persons of the sick, that He may invite us to stand at His right hand.*[76]

- *Let us hate ourselves and love Christ, as He loved us and gave Himself up for our sake.*[77]

- *Let us be strangers to the world, even as Christ was not of it.*[78]

- *Let us be humble and mild that we may inherit the land of life.*[79]

71 Aphrahat, 241,2; 256,6; cf. *Mt.* 5,13; Ignatius of Antioch, *Mag.* 10,2.

72 Aphrahat, 241,3; 256,5; cf. *1Co.* 10,9; *Rev.* 12,7-12; *Acts of Thomas*, 31; 44; 109-113; *Didascalia*, 178; Theophilus of Antioch, II,21; 23; 28.

73 Aphrahat, 241, 5-6; 249, 3-6, 14-19; cf. *Mt.* 7,24-25; Ignatius of Antioch, *Poly.* 1,1; *Eph.* 9,1; *Odes of Solomon*, 11,5; 22,12; 31,11.

74 Aphrahat, 241,6-8; 280,22-25; 277,21-25; 280-309; 241,15-16; *2Tim.* 2,21; *Acts*, 9,15; *Rom.* 9,21-23; *1Co.* 3,16-17; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 21,2; 15,3; *Odes of Solomon*, 7,4; 11,11; 25,8; 10,2; 12,12; *Acts of Thomas*, 6-7; 87; 88; 148; 156; Tatian, 15; *Didascalia*, 109-110.

75 Aphrahat, 241,8; 244,25-245,1; 248,9-10; 249,1-12; 256,19-20; 245,15-16; cf. *Mt.* 5,19-20; 13,45-46; *2Co.* 6,10; *Lk.* 18,22-23; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 11,2; 10,3; *Odes of Solomon*, 9,5; 11,9; 41,10; *Acts of Thomas*, 53; 60; 61; 19-20; 99-100; 136; 108-113; 78; 79; 143; 156; *Didascalia*, 217-218; 56; 28; 178; 186; Tatian, 11.

76 Aphrahat, 241,11-12; cf. *Mt.* 25, 34-36; *Didascalia*, 30; 55; 156; 176; 187; 66; 82-84; Ignatius of Antioch, *Smyr.* 6,2.

77 Aphrahat, 241,13-16; 280,2-281; cf. *Jn.* 12,25; *Eph.* 5,2; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 4,1; 15,3; *Mag.* 1; 7,1; *Tral.* 6,1; *Rom. Intr*; 2; 7; *Poly.* 5,1; 7,2; *Didache*, 1,2-3; Theophilus of Antioch, III,14; *Odes of Solomon*, 3,1-5ff; 2,2-7; 8,22; 11,2; 16,2-3; 23,3; 40,4; *Acts of Thomas*, 61; 72; 128; 160; 167; 36; 66; *Didascalia*, 33; 54-55; 114.

78 Aphrahat, 241,16-17; 244,22; 245,15-16; 248,25-26; 249; 252,24; 253,2-4; cf. *Gen.* 15,13; *Ex.* 22,21; *Ps.* 119,19; *Jer.* 14,8; *Mt.* 13,57; 25,35; *Acts of Thomas*, 4; 15; 72; 95; 99; 100; 109 (31); 123; 137; 154; *Didascalia*, 147.

79 Aphrahat, 241,18; 252,4-5; 273,1-2; 277,19-20; 304,15-19; cf. *Mt.* 5,5; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 10,2; *Tral.* 3,2; 4; 8,1; *Didache*, 3,7; *Acts of Thomas*, 85; 86; 94; *Didascalia*, 27; 28; 29; 36; 53; 133; 143; 163.

- Let us be unflagging in His service, that He may cause us to serve in the abode of the saints.[80]

- Let us be partakers in His suffering,[81]

- that so we may also rise up in His resurrection.[82]

- Let us bear His sign upon our bodies, that we may be delivered from the wrath to come.[83]

- Let us set upon our heads the helmet of redemption, that we may not be wounded and die in the battle. Let us gird our loins with truth, that we may not be found impotent in the contest. Let us arise and awaken Christ, that He may still the stormy blasts from us. Let us take a shield against the Evil One, the preparation of the Gospel of our Redeemer.[84]

- Let us receive power from our Lord to tread upon snakes and scorpions.[85]

- Let us lay aside from us wrath, with all fury and malice.[86]

- Let no reviling proceed out of our mouth, with which we pray unto God. Let us not be curses, that we may be delivered from the curse of the law.[87]

- Let us be a sweet odour, that our fragrance may breathe forth to all around.[88]

- Let us not call anyone our father in the earth, that we may be the children of the Father which is in heaven.[89]

- Though no man know us, yet they that have knowledge of us are many.[90]

80 Aphrahat, 241,19; cf. *Eph.* 6,6-7; Ignatius of Antioch, *Mag.* 6,1; *Tral.* 2,3; *Smyr.* 12,2; *Poly.* 6,1; *Eph. Intr*; *Didascalia*, 14; 103.

81 Aphrahat, 241,22; 248-252; 273,23; 276,20-281; cf. *2Tim.* 2,11-12; *Rom.* 8,17; Ignatius of Antioch, *Mag.* 9,1; *Rom.* 5; 6,3; *Smyr.* 5, 1; *Acts of Thomas* 107; 165; *Didascalia*, 129; 190-191, 160.

82 Aphrahat, 241,18; 248-252; 268; 276,20-281; 245,24-253; 296-297; 305,22-309.

83 Aphrahat, 241,23-24; 252, 13-15; cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 26; 51; 87; 120; 121; 131; 150; *Odes of Solomon*, 29,7; 39,7; 42,1.

84 Aphrahat, 244,2-7; 245,6-8; 248,17-25; 249,20-24; 252,19-23; 253,14-256; 265; 276,7-8; cf.*Eph.* 6,13-17; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 1,2; *Tral.* 4,2; 10; *Rom.* 5; *Poly.* 6,2; *Odes of Solomon*, 8,7; 9,6-9; 29,9-10; Tatian, 16; *Acts of Thomas*, 34; 39.

85 Aphrahat, 244,8-9; *Lk.* 10,19; Theophilus of Antioch, II,21; 23; 28; Tatian, 16; *Acts of Thomas*, 31; 32; 33; 109-113; *Didascalia*, 178.

86 Aphrahat, 244,10-12; 273, 15; 276, 8-10; cf. *Eph.* 4,31; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 10,2; *Didache*, 5,1; *Didascalia*, 34-35.

87 Aphrahat, 244,11-13; 248,12-13; 273,15-16; cf. *Rom.* 12,13; *Ja.* 3,14; *Didascalia*, 171-172; 254; 260; 36.

88 Aphrahat, 244,21-22; cf. *2Co.* 2,14-16; *Eph.* 5,2; *Phil.* 4,18; *Jn.* 12,3; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 17, 1; *Odes of Solomon*, 11,15; *Acts of Thomas*, 6,7.

89 Aphrahat, 244,24-25; cf. *Mt.* 23, 9; *Rom.* 8,14-16; Ignatius of Antioch, *Phil.* 2; *Odes of Solomon*, 8,23; 41,1-2; *Didascalia*, 14; 129; *Acts of Thomas*, 34; 94.

90 Aphrahat, 245,1-2; 248,25-26; 253,3-4.

- Let us rejoice in our hope at every time, that He who is our hope and our Redeemer may rejoice in us.[91]

- Let us judge ourselves righteously and condemn ourselves, that we may not hang down our faces before the judges who shall sit upon thrones and judge the tribes.[92]

- Let us seek His Kingdom and His righteousness, that we may receive increase in the land.[93]

- Let us think upon the things which are above, on the heavenly things, a meditate on them, where Christ has been lifted up and exalted... Let us raise our eyes on high, that we may see the splendour which shall be revealed. Let lift up our wings as eagles, that we may see the body there where it is.[94]

- Let us prepare as offerings for the King desirable fruits, fasting and prayer.[95]

- ...the chief place of the elect.[96]

- Whosoever does not bear fruit in the vineyard, shall be uprooted and cast out to torment.[97]

- Whosoever adopts the likeness of angels...[98]

- Whosoever takes upon him the yoke...[99]

- Whosoever wishes to flee from the darkness, let him walk while he has light.[100]

91 Aphrahat, 245,2-4; 268,13-15; 269,26; cf. *Rom.* 12,12; *1Tm.* 1,1; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 1,2; 21,2; *Mag.* 7,1; *Tral. Intr.* 2,2; *Phil. Intr.* 11,2; *Smyr.* 10,2; *Odes of Solomon*, 5,10; 29,1; 40,1-2; 7,2; 15,1; 31,3; *Acts of Thomas*, 183; *Didascalia*, 215; 217; 218.

92 Aphrahat, 245,4-7; 241,24-26; cf. *Mt.* 19,28; *Didache*, 16; *Odes of Solomon*, 33,11; *Didascalia*, 32; 39; 58; 115-116; 123.

93 Aphrahat, 245,9-12; cf. *Mt.* 6,33; *Odes of Solomon*, 8,5; 8,21; 9,10; 20,4; 25,10; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 1,1; *Mag.* 9,2; *Phil.* 3,3; *Acts of Thomas*, 18-22; Theophilus of Antioch, II,38; *Didascalia*, 10; 11; 36; 65; 103; 111-113; 158; 167; 172; 180-181; 184; 198; 201-202; 248-249; 255.

94 Aphrahat, 245,13-14,16-19; 249, 2-6; 252, 23-26; 261,10-11; 304,23-24; 312,17; cf. *Col.* 3,1-4; Ignatius of Antioch, *Tral.* 5; *Rom.* 3,2; *Poly.* 2,2; 3,2; *Odes of Solomon*, 7,5,18-19; 14,1; 41,6; Theophilus of Antioch, I,2; 5; 7; Tatian, 4; 20; *Acts of Thomas*, 34; 37; 53; 65; *Didascalia*, 17; 248.

95 Aphrahat, 245,19-20; 256,10; 261,14; 272,26; 273,26-27; *Didache*, 7,4; 8,1; *Acts of Thomas*, 5; 20; 29; 81; 86; 90; 95; 96; 104; 139; *Didascalia*, 43; 121; 164; 205-209; 212-215.

96 Aphrahat, 248,5; cf. *Mt.* 22,1-14; on this word *elect*, cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Tral. Intr.*; *Phil.* 11,1; *Poly.* 7,2; *Odes of Solomon*, 8,20; 23, 2-3; 33,13; *Didascalia*, 103.

97 Aphrahat, 248,10-12; 244,12-13; 241,4-5.

98 Aphrahat, 248,25; cf. *Mt.* 22,30; *Didascalia*, 186; 244; 262; *Acts of Thomas*, 36.

99 Aphrahat, 248,26-249,1; 253,10-11; 261,9-14; 272,23; 276,19-20; cf. *Mt.* 11,29-30; *Odes of Solomon*, 42,7-8; *Didache*, 6,2; *Acts of Thomas*, 86; 70; *Didascalia*, 113; 245; 249.

100 Aphrahat, 249,20-22; 253,6-8; 253,23-24; 256,1-4; 268,16-17; 305; cf. *Jn.* 12,35; Ignatius of

- Whosoever fears to flee in winter, let him prepare himself from the summertime. Whosoever looks forward to enter into rest, let him make his provision for the Sabbath.[101]

- Whosoever begs forgiveness of his Lord, let him also forgive his debtor. Whosoever does not demand back a hundred dinars, his Lord forgives him ten thousand talents.[102]

- Whosoever knows the will of his Lord, let him do that will, that he may not be beaten much.[103]

- (He) is like a tree planted by the waters. Whosoever again has trust in his Lord, is like a tree that is set out by the river.[104]

- My beloved.[105]

- our adversary is skilful[106]

- All the children of light... The children of the Good...[107]

- the blessed ones.[108]

- And let his speech be peaceful and pleasant, and his thought be sincere with all. Let him speak his words duly weighing them, and set a barrier to his mouth from harmful words.[109]

Antioch. *Rom.* 6,2; *Phil.* 2.1; *Odes of Solomon*, 10,1.6; 11,11; 13,19; 15, 1-2; 18,6; 21.3.6; *Acts of Thomas*, 6,7; 18; 27; 34; 35; 111,63-73; 118-119; 130; 146; 148; 153; 155; *Didascalia*, 14; 129.

101 Aphrahat, 249,21-24.

102 Aphrahat, 249,24-252,1; cf. *Mt.* 18,23-35; Ignatius of Antioch, *Phil.* 8,1; *Acts of Thomas*, 24-25; 29; 38; 94; *Didascalia*, 63; 75; 77; 83; 86; 91; 123; 130; 140.

103 Aphrahat, 252,6-7; 265, 23; cf. *Lk.* 12,47; *Didascalia*, 12; *Odes of Solomon*, 9,2-3; 18, 8; *Acts of Thomas*, 1-3; 145-146; 16, 7; 168.

104 Aphrahat, 252,26; 253,1-2; 265,19-22; cf. *Ps.* 1,2-3; *Jer.* 17,8; *Odes of Solomon*, 11; 19; 21; Theophilus of Antioch, 24-25.

105 Aphrahat, 253,14; 261,13,15; 272,20; 284,11; 285,15; 292,15; 300,25; 301,6,21; 305,22; 309,23; 312,19; cf. *Mt.* 3,17; *Rom.* 1,7; *1Co.* 10,14; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 1,1; *Mag.* 11.1; *Tral. Intr*; 8,1; *Rom. Intr.*; *Phil.* 9,2; *Smyr. Intr*; 4,1; *Poly.* 8,2; *Didascalia*, 14; 92; 205; 248; 260; 263; 215; 171.

106 Aphrahat, 253,14ff; 265; 276,16-17; 305.

107 Aphrahat, 253,23; 256,1; cf. *Lk.* 16,8; Jn. 12,26; *Eph.* 5,8; *1Th.* 5,5; Ignaitus of Antioch, *Phil.* 2.1; *Acts of Thomas*, 94; 34; *Didascalia*, 14; 129; 31-37; 50.

108 Aphrahat, 261,9; 265,21; cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph. Intr*; 1,3; 2,1; 5,1; 12,2; *Mag. Intr*; *Rom.* 10,1; *Phil.* 10,2; *Smyr.* 1,2; *Poly.* 7,2; *Didache*, 1,5; *Acts of Thomas*, 94; *Odes of Solomon*, 32,1; 33,11; *Didascalia*, 24; 112; 130; 186; 201; 209; 248; 51; 170; Theophilus of Antioch, II,16,17.

109 Aphrahat, 273,2-6.16-19.24-25; 276,1-8.12-14; cf. *2Tim.* 2,23-25; Ignaitus of Antioch, *Eph.* 6,2; 15; *Tral.* 4,1; 5,1; *Poly.* 1,3; 2,2; *Didache*, 2,3-6; 11,8; 15,3; *Didascalia*, 26-27; 203; 3-4 54; 171; *Odes of Solomon*, 31,3.

- *Let him put far from him hasty laughter.*[110]

- *Let him not love the adornment of garments*[111]

- *nor again does it become him to let his hair grow long and adorn it, or to anoint it with sweet-scented unguents.*[112]

- *Let him not recline at feastings.*[113]

- *Let him not dare to exceed at wine*[114]

- *Let him put far from him proud thoughts.*[115]

- *Let him put away from him a crafty tongue*[116]

- *Let him put from him envy and wrath.*[117]

- *Mockery is a hateful fault, and to bring it up upon the heart is not right.*[118]

- *Let him not lend and take interest.*[119]

- *Let him not love avarice.*[120]

- *Let him suffer wrong and not do wrong.*[121]

- *Let him put away from him turmoil, and words of jesting let him not utter.*[122]

- *Where he is received, let him reprove.... In an acceptable time let him speak his word.*[123]

- *and where they receive him not, let him understand his own honour..., let him be silent.*[124]

- *Let him not for his belly's sake make himself despised by his begging, and to such a one as fears God let him reveal his secret.*[125]

110 Aphrahat, 273,6-7; cf. *Didascalia*, 216, which might be close to Aphrahat's text.
111 Aphrahat, 273,7,13-14; cf. *Mt.* 6,28; *1Tim.* 2,9; *1Pet.* 3, 3; *Didascalia*, 16; 24-25.
112 Aphrahat, 273,8-9; cf. *1Co.* 11,14; *1Pet.* 3,3; *Didascalia*, 16; Tatian, 25.
113 Aphrahat, 273,10; cf. *Mt.* 23,6; *Acts of Thomas*, 5; 28; *Didascalia*, 55.
114 Aphrahat, 273,11-12; *Eph.* 5, 18; *1Tim.* 5,23; *Didascalia*, 54; 55; 94.
115 Aphrahat, 273,12-13; cf. *Lk.* 1,51; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 10,2; *Didascalia*, 35-36; 48; 54.
116 Aphrahat, 273,15-19; cf. *1Pet.* 3,10; *Didascalia*, 34; 56; 158; *Didache*, 2,4.
117 Aphrahat, 273,15; 276,8-10; cf. *1Tim.* 6,4; cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Rom.* 7,2; *Odes of Solomon*, 7,20; 28,11.
118 Aphrahat, 273,20-21,25-27; 312,8-15; cf. *Gal.* 6,7; *Odes of Solomon*, 31, 2; *Didascalia*, 167.
119 Aphrahat, 273,22; cf. *Ex.* 22,25; *Ez.* 18,8; *Didascalia*, 45.
120 Aphrahat, 273,22-23; cf. *1Tim.* 3,9; *Didascalia*, 34; 133; 163; *Acts of Thomas*, 28.
121 Aphrahat, 273, 23.
122 Aphrahat, 273,23-25.
123 Aphrahat, 276,1,3; cf. *1Tim.* 4,2; *Tit.* 1,13; 2,15; *Didache*, 15,3; *Didascalia*, 34; 171; 55-57; 74; 81-82; 87; 129; 138.
124 Aphrahat, 276,1-3; cf. *2Tim.* 3,5; *Didascalia*, 158; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 15; *Tral.* 4,1; *Rom.* 2,1; *Phil.* 1,1; *Eph.* 21; *Mag.* 3,2; *Smyr.* 9,1.
125 Aphrahat, 276,4-5; cf. *Rom.* 16,18; *Didascalia*, 47; 34; 133; 163; 55; 11; 203; 214; 242;

- let him keep himself from the evil (man). Let him not speak in complaisance with a wicked man, nor with his enemy... With a wicked man let him have no converse and with a contemptuous man let him not speak, lest he give himself to contempt. With a blasphemer let him not dispute, lest his Lord be blasphemed on his account. Let him depart from a slanderer, and let no man please another man with speciousness of words.[126]

- And so let him contend as to have no enemy at all.[127]

- When he has, and gives to the poor, let him rejoice; and when he has not, let it not grieve him.[128]

- These things beseem solitaries who... become disciples of Christ.[129]

- For thus it befits the disciples of Christ to be like unto Christ their Master.[130]

- Again I will remind thee, my beloved, also of that which is written.[131]

Aphrahat remained consistent with the theology of his Syrian church in all the *Demonstrations*. The ascetic spirituality of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* was in harmony with that of their Church and they appear to have had no intention of forming an independent body. Indeed, the lives of ascetics in the Syrian Church, from Ignatius of Antioch until Theodoret of Cyrrhus, show no trend towards independent spirituality and a special rule. The whole Church was ascetic, and those who were more radical in their asceticism did not separate themselves from the body of the Church or follow a special rule of life. The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* lived according to the ordinary Christian spirituality of their people, and great care must be taken before regarding *Demonstration* VI, or any other *Demonstration*, as a description of a special way of life, let alone a kind of monastic discipline.[132]

Didache, 4,9.11; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 11,1; *Acts of Thomas*, 146.

126 Aphrahat, 276,6-8; cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 10,3; 7,1; *Mag.* 10,2; *Tral.* 8,1; 11,1; *Phil.* 3,1; 6,3; *Smyr.* 7; *Poly.* 5,1; *Didache*, 3,1; 5; *Didascalia*, 60-61; 85; 118; 241; 183.

127 Aphrahat, 276,7-8; cf. *Mt.* 5,44; *Didache*, 1,3; *Didascalia*, 14.

128 Aphrahat, 276,10-12; 256,19-20; cf. *Lk.* 18,22-23; *Didache*, 1,4-5; 4,6-8; 15,4; *Acts of Thomas*, 19ff; 59; *Didascalia*, 55; 168-170; 180-184; 217-218.

129 Aphrahat, 276, 20-21; cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 1,2; 3,1; 10,1; *Mag.* 10,1; *Poly.* 2.1; *Didascalia*, 200; 57; 193.

130 Aphrahat, 276,22-281; cf. *Mt.* 10,25; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 1,1; 10,33; *Tral.* 1,2; *Phil.* 7,2; *Odes of Solomon*, 38,11; 39,13; *Didascalia*, 37; 57; 97-98; 93; 175; 190; 193; 200-201; 254.

131 Aphrahat, 285,15-16; 297,19; 'that which is written' is the Bible.

132 Cf. further details later in this chapter.

2. VIRGINITY

Virginity was associated with the prelapsarian state of Adam and Eve; it was destroyed by everything *sown* by man rather than God. Through baptism, however, virginity can be restored. For baptism represents the death of our *old man* and the resurrection of our *new man*; it will be perfectly achieved with the resurrection of the dead at the second coming of Christ. Hence, Aphrahat's description of the original state of virginity and its connection with resurrection:

Concerning then this resurrection of the dead, my beloved, according to n power I will instruct thee. For from the beginning God created Adam; mould him from the dust of the earth, and raised him up. For if, while Adam was nc He made him from nothing, how much easier now is it for Him to raise him up; for lo! as a seed he is sown in the earth. For if God should do those things that are easy for us, His works would not appear mighty to us. For lo! there are amongst men artificers who make wonderful things, and those who are not artificers of the works stand and wonder how they were done; and the work of their fellows is difficult in their eyes. How much more should not the works of God be as a marvel! But for God this was no great thing, that the dead should be quickened. Before seed was sown in the earth, the earth produced that which had not been cast into it. Before it had conceived, it bore in its virginity. How then is this difficult, that the earth should cause to spring up again what had been cast into it and after conception should bear? And lo! her travail-pains are near; as Isaiah said: 'Who hath seen anything like this and who hath heard such things as these? that the earth should travail in one day, and a people should be born in one hour?'[133] *For Adam unsown sprang up; unconceived he was born. But lo! now his offspring are sown, and wait for the rain, and shall spring up. And lo! the earth teems with many, and the time of her bringing forth is at hand.*[134]

Virginity, the earth which has not been ploughed, gives life without the assistance of any outside force or influence: *Before seed was sown in the earth, the earth produced that which had not been cast into it. Before it had conceived, it bore in its virginity.*[135] Adam was in this state of *virginity* at the moment of his creation; he contained, in himself, the power of God: *For Adam unsown sprang up; unconceived he was born.*[136] Virginity, then, is the original state of man, which has in itself the power of God, and which can give life without external assistance.

133 *Is.* 66, 8.
134 Aphrahat, 369, 18-26; 372, 1-19.
135 Aphrahat, 372, 7-12.
136 Aphrahat, 372, 15-17.

a. Resurrection - Baptism

Aphrahat teaches that the spirituality of virginity is the mystery of resurrection: *Concerning then this resurrection of the dead, my beloved, according to my power I will instruct thee...* Aphrahat bases his judgement on *the parable of the woman who has married the seven husbands... Then our Lord said to them: 'Ye do greatly err, and ye know not the scriptures nor the power of God. For they who are worthy of that world and of that resurrection from the 'ead, they that are men and do not take wives, nor are the woman married to usbands, for they cannot die, for they are as the angels of God and the children f the resurrection...'*[137] The mystery of resurrection is already performed in oaptism: *Buried with him in baptism wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*[138]

The process of death and resurrection contained in baptism is thoroughly explained by Aphrahat: *Therefore, my beloved, we also have received of the Spirit of Christ, and Christ dwelleth in us.... For from baptism do we receive the Spirit of Christ. For in that hour in which the priests invoke the Spirit, the heavens open and it descends and 'moves upon the waters'.*[139] *And those that are baptized are clothed in it; for the Spirit stays aloof from all that are born of the flesh, until they come to the new birth by water, and then they receive the Holy Spirit. For in the first birth they are born with an animal soul which is created within man and is not thereafter subject to death, as he said: 'Adam became a living soul'.*[140] *But in the second birth, that through baptism, they received the Holy Spirit from a particle of the Godhead, and it is not again subject to death....*[141]

The new *body*, received from the *Heavenly Spirit* in baptism, is a *heavenly* and *spiritual body*, for already we are the *people of God* who live in *heaven*:[142] *The Apostle said: 'There is an animal body and there is a spiritual body, seeing that it is thus written: The first Adam became a living soul and the second Adam a quickening spirit'.*[143] *So they say that there will be two Adams. But he said: 'As we have put on the image of that Adam who was from the earth, so we shall put on the image of that Adam who is from heaven.'*[144] *For Adam who was from the earth was he that sinned, and the Adam who is from heaven is our Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ. They then that receive the Spirit of Christ come into the*

137 Aphrahat, 392, 10-21ff. cf. *Mt.* 23, 28-32.
138 *Col.* 2, 12; *Rom.* 6, 3-4; Aphrahat, 529, 5-8.
139 *Gen.* 1,2.
140 *Gen.* 2, 7.
141 Aphrahat, 292, 15-26; 293, 1-11.
142 Aphrahat, 308-309; 361-368; 381, 12-24; 528, 11-14.
143 *1Cor.* 15, 44-45.
144 *1Cor.* 15, 49.

likeness of the heavenly Adam, Who is our Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ. For the animal shall be swallowed up in the spiritual, as I wrote unto thee above.[145] Although these heavenly people who accept Jesus Christ live on the earth in their mundane bodies, this *earthly body shall die* during baptism and *must clothe itself with that which shall not die, and that which is corruptible must clothe itself with that which is incorruptible.*[146] In Aphrahat, as elsewhere in Syrian spirituality, there is no separation of spirit and body within a human being; spirit, soul, and body are completely one. This unity, which comes from God, is the true state of every man who has risen through baptism: The *earthly man is swallowed up in the spiritual* (and) *heavenly* man, and then, Christ pervades of the new-born.

b. Purity

The state of the new-born is one of *purity*, and his first Christian duty after baptism is to *guard the Spirit of Christ in purity.*[147] The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*, to whom Aphrahat is speaking, have to remain pure after baptism in order to keep their virginity for Christ. Thus, baptism is the act which cleanses all sins and creates a *new man* in Christ[148] and those who commit themselves to *virginity and holiness* have to be ready for *a fight* to keep the *Spirit of Christ in purity.*[149] The life of the baptized man is a *fight* for *purity and holiness*. One must struggle to maintain the purity and holiness of the body renewed through baptism, for the baptised body is *the temple of the Holy Spirit*. In the baptismal theology of the Syrian Church, the new born in Christ recovers his original purity through the baptismal mystery of death and resurrection. Those who are baptised in Christ to regain their prelapsarian state,[150] and in the process they are commit themselves to preserving the purity of their bodies, the *holy temples* of God.[151]

In Aphrahat, this original state before the fall of Adam is called *virginity*[152] and the mystery of baptism in Christ is seen as a recovery of man's first state before the sin of Adam. Similarly, in the *Odes of Solomon*, virginity is endowed with a special importance for aspiring sons of God; the *perfect virgin*, the Church of God and the pure bride of Christ, is represented in those preparing

145 Aphrahat, 35, 25-26; 308, 1-13; 381, 12-24.
146 *1Cor.* 5, 53; Aphrahat, 368, 1-7; 369, 1-17; 392, 7.
147 Aphrahat, 293, 24-25; 296, 1ff; 308.
148 Aphrahat, 181, 12-16; 501, 8-10ff; 528, 11-14.
149 Aphrahat, 341, 11-26; 344; 345; 348; 349; 352.
150 Cf. Denzinger, *Ritus Orientalium* I. 344; Bernard, *Odes of Solomon*, 39.
151 Cf. the series of articles on baptism in the Syrian Church, edited by Vellian, *Studies on Syrian Baptismal Rites*.
152 Aphrahat, 837, 14-16.

themselves for baptism and the life of purity.[153] Aphrahat's own position is not remote from the spirituality of the *perfect virgin*; his *Bnay* and *Bnat Qyama* made their vow of virginity before baptism, in order to restore in themselves the original virginity of man and of all creation.

The strong relationship between purity and baptism in Aphrahat and the *Odes* is also expressed in the *Didascalia*: *For we do not believe, brethren, when* (once) *a man has gone down into the water that he will do again the abominable and defiled works of the wicked heathen.*[154] Moreover baptism is conceived in Aphrahat, as in the Syrian Church more generally, as a time of vigilance and battle against sin; the battle is waged in the service of purity: *Let your baptism remain as your arms.*[155] This baptismal vigilance and struggle for purity was aided by fasting: *And before the baptism let the baptiser and him who is to be baptised fast, and any others who are able. And thou shalt bid him who is to be baptised to fast one or two days before.*[156] In conclusion, this close relationship between baptism and virginity-purity is not only a characteristic point of Aphrahat's spirituality, it is a feature of Syrian theology in general.

c. Celibacy and Admission of the Qyama

The celibacy and continence of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* was a fight against the *sin of Adam* rather than an imitation of Christ's celibacy. The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* were not the only baptised Christians in the Syrian Church but they were the only celibate community. Celibacy was never a requirement for baptism in the Syrian Church, and both married and celibate people were admitted to baptism from the first century up to the present time. The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* decided of their own free will that celibacy was the best way to *fight the sin of Adam* and so to inherit the kingdom of heaven promised in the baptismal covenant. They were chosen by the Church, prior to baptism, from among those who offered themselves as disciples and their admission to the life of *virginity* and *holiness* took place during a baptismal liturgy. The example of Gideon, who selected his troop to fight the Midianites,[157] provided the criterion for selection of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*.[158] It seems that candidates for the *Qyama* were numerous, and the Church had only to choose those who were genuinely ready for this *fight*.[159] Baptism was the *test of water* for the *Bnay* and

153 Cf. the text of the perfect virgin, p 46.
154 *Didascalia*, 60.
155 Ignatius of Antioch, *Poly.* 6, 2.
156 *Didache*, 7, 4.
157 *Judg.* 7; Aphrahat, 344, 10-345, 5.
158 Aphrahat, 345, 5-26. On this Seventh *Demonstration* see esepcially Murray, 'The Exhortation', 59-80; Jansma, 'Aphraates. Demonstration VII', 21-48 (citing the earlier literature).
159 Aphrahat, 256, 6-9; 345, 6-26.

the *Bnat Qyama*; the ceremony took place in the presence of a baptismal assembly, *the blowers on the trumpets, i.e. the preachers of the Church, call out and warn all the 'covenant' of God before baptism,* (that is) *those who have vowed themselves to virginity and holiness* (marital continence), *the young men and virgins and saints....*[160] Those who failed the *test of water* were the slack ones who loved material life and were not strong enough to fight against the world of sin.[161] Baptism was a principal subject in the *Demonstrations* of Aphrahat[162] and the vocation of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* for the life of *virginity* and *holiness* was founded on the *test of water*. It was also an important basis of asceticism in the Syrian Church; for the ascetics were struggling to achieve the individual resurrection bestowed during the liturgy of baptism.[163]

d. Unity

Virginity also stood for unity *(iḥidayutha)* in Aphrahat, and he clearly presented the unity of man (nasha=man+woman) as the unity of God in man: *And as regards that which I said; that there they shall not take wives, nor is male distinguished from female, our Lord and His apostles have taught us. For our Lord said: 'They that are worthy of that world, and of that resurrection from the abode of the dead, shall not take wives, nor shall (women) become wives to men; for they cannot die; but they are as the angels in heaven, and are the children of God.'*[164] *And the apostle said: 'There is neither male nor female, neither bond nor free; but ye are all one in Jesus Christ'.*[165]

In Aphrahat, and Syrian spirituality in general, unity is the state of each follower of Christ; it is a force that combats dualism, for man and woman are not two but *one in Jesus Christ.* They have no need to *take* one another in order to be together because, in Christ, *male* is not *distinguished from female* and once united one cannot be redivided.[166] The *one* was the name of everyone born in Christ because God Himself is *one (ḥad)*[167] and *one (ḥad)* is His Christ,[168] and *one* is His Church,[169] and *one* is the word,[170] and *one (ḥad)* is His Spirit.[171]

160 Aphrahat, 345, 6-10; cf. more details in Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 440ff.
161 Aphrahat, 345, 11-26.
162 Cf. Duncan, *Baptism.*
163 Cf. Beck, 'Asketentum und Mönchtum', 343.
164 *Lk.* 20, 35-36.
165 *Gal.* 3, 28; Aphrahat, 1016, 20-1017, 3.
166 Aphrahat, 1016, 21.
167 Aphrahat, 284, 3; 500, 15; 801, 15; 1016, 18-19; II, 12, 14; II, 124, 11; II, 128, 8; II, 129, 6-7; II, 132, 1.
168 Aphrahat, 281, 15; 284, 2; 285, 7-8; 269, 4; II, 10, 15-17; 101, 10; 105, 10; 124, 11-12.
169 Aphrahat, 161, 10-24; 281, 11-23; 284, 1-12; 285, 7-14; 452, 20; 468, 1-7; 481, 16-20; 529, 8; 840, 5-7, 22-26; 841, 1-2; 1016, 15-19; 1017, 1-3; II: 124, 11-14.
170 Aphrahat, 385, 16-389, 3.

Moreover, there is *one altar*,[172] *one baptism*, *one* faith,[173] and we are all *one* in God. One of the most challenging terms in Syrian spirituality is the word *ihidaya*, derived from *had*, which means: only, alone, by oneself, the only-begotten.[174] For the Syrian church, the theological basis of *ihidaya* is Christ, the *Ihidaya (Only-Begotten Son) of the Father*, and the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* were also called the *ihidaye*.[175] To translate *ihidaya* as solitary, hermit, monk or nun, however, would not be consistent with the early Syrian Christian tradition; such a translation contradicts the original meaning of the word.[176] Furthermore, the context of *ihidaya* in Aphrahat has nothing directly to do with monastic life; it is used in relation to the search for unity with God, interrupted by the old man's lust after the opposite sex.

Ihidaya appears many times in conjunction with virginity,[177] as virginity is an expression of the unity of the human being with God. It is only with Aphrahat that the term *ihidaya* was first used in the Syrian church as a title for the *Bnay and Bnat Qyama*. In fact, it is certain that Aphrahat calls the *virgins* and the *holy ones (continents: qaddishe) ihidaye*;[178] and from this we can conclude that the term *ihidaya* does not concern only the ascetic who was never married, but also one who had been married but who then separated from the earthly partner for the Lord's sake; this was the case of the *holy ones (qaddishe)* among the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*. On the other hand, Aphrahat indicates a strong conceptual link between the *ihidaye* of his ascetic flock and Jesus Christ the *Ihidaya* of the Father:[179]

... for those that take not wives shall be ministered to by the Watchers of heaven. Those that preserve 'qaddishuta' (continence) *shall rest in the sanctuary of the Most High. The Only-Begotten (Ihidaya) who is from the bosom of His Father shall cause all the 'ihidaye' to rejoice. There is there neither male nor female, neither bond nor free,*[180] *but they all are the children of the Most High. And the pure virgins who are betrothed to Christ shall light their lamps* [181] *and with the Bridegroom shall they go into the marriage chamber. All those that are*

171 Aphrahat, II, 124, 12.
172 Aphrahat, 509, 13.
173 Aphrahat, II, 124, 11-14.
174 Cf. Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dict.* 126.
175 Aphrahat, 269, 5; II: 100, 15-17; II: 101, 10; II: 105, 10.
176 Cf. Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 206.
177 Aphrahat, 840, 5-841, 2; 260, 13-261, 14; 268, 15-269, 6; 272, 20-22; 276, 18-20; 341, 23; 344, 10-25; 356, 6-12; 404, 6; 1004, 3-10; 833, 5-6; 840, 26-841, 1-2.
178 Aphrahat, 260, 13-261,14; 269, 1-6; 272, 20-23; 276, 19; 341, 23; 344, 25; 356, 8; 404, 6; 1004, 10. I refer to the Syriac texts of the *Patrologia Syriaca*.
179 Aphrahat, 269, 3-4.
180 *Gal.* 3,28.
181 *Mt.* 15,10.

betrothed to Christ are far removed from the curse of the Law, and are redeemed from the condemnation of the daughters of Eve; for they are not wedded to men so as to receive the curses and come into the pains. They take no thought of death, because they do not deliver children to him. And in place of a mortal husband, they are betrothed to Christ. And because they do not bear children, there is given to them the name that is better than sons and daughters.[182] *And instead of the groans of the daughters of Eve, they utter the songs of the Bridegroom. The wedding-feast of the daughters of Eve continues for but seven days; but for these (virgins) is the Bridegroom who departs not for ever. The adornment of the daughters of Eve is wool that wears out a perishes, but the garments of these wear not out. Old age withers the beauty the daughters of Eve, but the beauty of these shall be renewed in the time of Resurrection.'*[183]

It is evident from this text that the term *iḥidaya* serves to describe the spirituality of all risen people who do not marry. Furthermore, Jesus Christ the *iḥidaya* will bring joy and happiness to the *iḥidaye* of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*, for they are betrothed to Him and He is their immortal husband. One may deduce that the term *iḥidaya* implies the need to abandon all kinds of earthly marriage in order to be married to Jesus Christ, the only immortal Bridegroom. The relationship between Christ the *Iḥidaya* and the ascetic *iḥidaya* is one of betrothal and unity, and the Christian ascetic who wishes to become an *iḥidaya* must, according to Aphrahat, be celibate, as the *virgins*, or separated from his partner as the *holy ones*. One may say, therefore, that earthly marriage and *iḥidaya* are contradictory states. The *iḥidaya* can never be or remain married on this earth, for he is married to Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom.

It is important to note that the word *iḥidaya* in Aphrahat applies to men as well as to women of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*. This fact seems peculiar to Aphrahat, for in Syriac the word *iḥidaya* was applied only to the ascetic male. In summary, I would suggest that the Aphrahat's use of the word *iḥidaya* can best be translated as: the only one or the single one, as it refers to man's unity with God, and also indicates a category of Christians seeking unity with God through celibacy. The *iḥidaye* to whom Aphrahat refers are therefore celibates or continents, and *iḥidaya* for him means 'single' not 'solitary'.[184] The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* are *iḥidaye* (the single ones), not because they reject Christian marriage, but because they seek to achieve virginity and unity in themselves by fighting against their sins.

182 *Is.* 56,5.
183 Aphrahat, 267, 26-269, 26. The translation is from Gwynn, *Aphrahat*, 367.
184 Cf. further details in Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 206-209.

e. Marriage

Aphrahat clearly states that the main cause for the separation of man from woman and vice versa was not the pursuit of devout celibacy but the corruption of relations between them. The *lust*[185] of our *old man* was the way of corruption and the destroyer of the unity of Adam and Eve.[186] Before considering lust, therefore, one should recall that marriage is an ideal created by God and virginity is the pure and perfect path towards this marriage.

e 1. The marriage of purity

Man was conceived and dwelt in the thought of God, and while in conception he was held in his mind, by the word of his mouth he (God) *created all the creatures. When he had completed and adorned the world, and nothing was lacking in it, then he gave birth to man from his thought, and he shaped the son of man with his hands. Adam saw that the world was completed. He* (God) *gave him* (man) *authority over everything that he had made, like a man who has a son and wishes to make him a marriage feast.* (First) *he betrothes for him a woman, then builds him a house, prepares and adorns all that is needed for his son. Then he makes him a wedding feast and gives his son authority over his house... After God brought forth Adam from his thought, he shaped him, blew into him of his breath, and gave him knowledge of discernment, so that he might distinguish good from evil and know that God had made him. And as he knew his Maker, God was formed and conceived in the midst of the thought of man. So he* (man) *became a temple for God his Maker, as it is written 'you are the temple of God'.*[187] And he said: 'I shall dwell in them, and I shall walk among them.'[188] Aphrahat calls this time of Adam and the creatures with God a time of virginity: *When the earth was virgin, it was not rendered unclean... Adam in his virginity was beloved and good.*[189]

e 2. The marriage of corruption

The life of virginity and purity with God did not last long. God gave Adam *the knowledge of discernment, so that he might distinguish good from evil and know that God had made him,*[190] but when he gave in to Satan's temptation he forgot God and lost this knowledge of discernment and transgressed the commandment: *And there are those who even while they live are dead unto God.*

185 I prefer to translate 'regta' by 'lust' rather than 'desire', and I have altered Gwynn's translation accordingly.

186 The verses about virginity need to be read in context, for the surrounding text mentions the corrupt life of men and women, and proposes that the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* be celibate in order to cure the disordered relations between the two sexes.

187 *1Cor.* 3, 16.

188 *Lev.* 26, 11-16. The text is from Aphrahat, 797, 3 to 800, 11 and 1017, 3-5.

189 Aphrahat, 837, 12-15.

190 Aphrahat, 800, 2-6.

For He laid a commandment on Adam and said to him, 'In the day that thou shalt eat of the tree thou shalt surely die'.[191] *And after he had transgressed the commandment, and had eaten, he lived nine hundred and thirty years; but he was accounted dead unto God because of his sins. But that it may be made certain for thee that a sinner is called dead when even he lives...*[192] Aphrahat explains Adam's sin as one of pride, *youth* and *lust*. First, Adam began to s himself as the lord of the universe and to consider Eve as the creation of his c power: *Adam in his virginity was beloved and good. After he gave birth to he erred and transgressed the commandment.*[193] Secondly, he decided to Eve as a wife during his *youth*, a time of immaturity and inexperience, with the agreement of God: *If he* (Noah) *had taken a wife in his youth, he would also have fathered sons like Adam, who at the age of one hundred thirty years fathered Seth.*[194] Thirdly, Adam was inflamed by the lust of Eve: *he* (the devil) *inflames them with the lust of Eve..., it was through Eve that he* (the devil) *came in upon Adam, and Adam was enticed because of his youth.*[195] Then, death ruled not only over Adam and Eve, but over all human generations: *So when he* (Adam) *transgressed the commandment and ate of the tree, death ruled over him and over all his progeny. Even over those who had not sinned, even over them did death rule through Adam's transgression of the commandment.*[196] Yet, *if the sons of man do not know their maker, he* (God) *is not formed in their midst, does not dwell with them, and is not conceived in their thought. But they are regarded before him* (God) *like the beasts, like the rest of the creatures.*[197] After Adam, *the sons of Seth in their virginity were worthy, but when they became mixed up with the daughters of Cain, they were blotted out with the water of the flood.*[198] With the fall of Adam, the *earth was rendered unclean...* and it *brought forth thorns.*[199] *Virginity* was destroyed, not by marriage, but by the *lust of Eve* which incited the immature Adam to rebel against God and follow his own will.

e 3. Restoration of marriage

Noah was the only righteous and innocent man who stood before God, and God chose him to rebuild the world which had been corrupted by Adam: *Noah was five hundred years old when God spoke with him and said to him, 'You have I seen righteous and innocent before me in this generation'.*[200] *And his*

191 *Gen.* 2, 17.
192 Aphrahat, 393, 1-9.
193 Aphrahat, 837, 14-16.
194 Aphrahat, 553, 3-6.
195 Aphrahat, 256, 25-26. I have replaced the word 'inexperience' with 'youth'.
196 Aphrahat, 992, 8-19; 993, 1-2; cf. also 993, 3ff.
197 Aphrahat, 800, 11-16.
198 Aphrahat, 837, 16-19.
199 Aphrahat, 837, 12-14.
200 *Gen.* 7, 1.

innocence, so it seems to us--was in this regard: When he saw that the generation of Seth was intermingled with the house of Cain, which was cursed, he determined that he would not marry a wife nor have children, so that they should not be intermingled and cursed with the house of Cain, the cursed seed. When God saw that his heart was pure and innocent, he wanted that from him should go forth the replacement for the world which he was planning to blot out because of their sins... Noah had not married a wife in that entire time before God spoke to him and said to him, 'You have I seen perfect before me in this generation. Now make for yourself an ark of wood that you may take shelter in it.'[201] *Now when Noah heard these things, that God commanded him to make an ark, saying to him, 'I am surely going to destroy mankind from off the face of the earth, for they have corrupted their way',*[202] *then in his five hundredth year, Noah took a wife from the daughters of Seth, the blessed seed of the righteous. He fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth, these three. Noah commanded his sons not to take wives from the children of Cain. But he gave them wives from the seed of the righteous, so that seed would be preserved from them on the face of the earth, and so that from them the world might be re-established.*[203]
According to Aphrahat, the decision to marry was made by God not man, and virginity was the divine and natural path which led to marriage according to God's will. Virginity was the time for the mortification of the passions of *youth*. for, as in the life of Adam, marriage in the time of *youth* would be under *the lust of Eve* and subject to the weakness of man's will. Virginity, as it features in the lives of Adam and Noah, was only a preparation for marriage. The virgin man should be ready, in perfect purity and righteousness, to marry a wife taken from *the blessed seed of the righteous*, and that is the will of God.

e 4. Noah and the Qyama

There is a strong similarity between the text concerning Noah and his progeny quoted above and Aphrahat's texts concerning the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*:

1. Noah *would not marry a wife nor have children*,[204] and the *Bnay Qyama do not take wives* or reproduce.[205] The reason for Noah's unmarried state was that he *should not be intermingled and cursed with the house of Cain, the cursed seed* and offshoot of Adam and Eve's corrupt relations.[206] The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* were also admonished to flee from the *lust* of their *youth* and

201 *Gen.* 7, 1.
202 *Gen.* 6, 7.
203 Aphrahat, 549, 12-27; 552, 1-17; 128, 5ff; II: 64-93; II: 40, 22-41, 25; II: 76.
204 Aphrahat, 549, 18-19.
205 Aphrahat, 261, 4; 840, 10-13; 1016-1017; 269.
206 Aphrahat, 549, 20-21; 820-821.

remain *the single ones (ihidaye) or the holy ones (qaddishe)*, without marriage.[207]

2. *Youth* for Noah was not a time of marriage, but a time of purification and preparation that would enable him to hear God's voice. *Youth* was also a time of preparation for the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*.[208]

3. The early Syrian Church considered Noah's ark a prototype of their Church, a gathering of holy people in peace.[209] The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyam* were not only *the children of the Church* who led a life of purity and holiness,[210] but also a part of the *Church*.[211]

4. *From Noah came a second world, because he preserved his innocence i the generation of destruction*, and from Noah's progeny, Jesus Christ was born.[212] In the Syrian Church the second world is the world of resurrection provided through baptism and achieved during the second coming of Christ; thus, it is called by Aphrahat *the heavenly world*, as the *heavenly Spirit* swallowed the earthly one. The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* ressemble the inhabitants of the *heavenly world* and Christ dwells in their purity and holiness.[213]

5. *The living God* is the God of the risen people *and not of the dead.* The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* were regarded as risen through baptism, and so as belonging *to the living God.*[214]

6. *Then, in his five hundredth year, Noah took a wife from the daughters of Seth, the blessed seed of the righteous.*[215] The risen people of the Church of God belonged to the *heavenly* seed of the heavenly Adam, Jesus Christ, and they were *betrothed* to Him.[216] The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* were also from the *heavenly* world, and were *all the pure virgins betrothed to Christ.*

7. The flood, by which God was *surely going to destroy mankind from off the face of the earth*, because of sin and corruption[217] is the flood of baptism which destroys the wicked and preserves the righteous. The virginity of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* was a baptismal promise (and then a state of life) made for the sake of purity and righteousness.[218]

207 Aphrahat, 256-260; 261, 1-14; 685-692; 837, 12-26; 840, 1-3; 1017.
208 Aphrahat, 261, 9-14; 837, 12-26; 840, 18-20 ff; 260, 5ff.
209 Cf. Murray, *Symbols*, 253, 258; Brock, *The Holy Spirit*, 74.
210 Aphrahat, 841,6; 681, 4; 1040, 22.
211 Aphrahat, 573.
212 Cf. Aphrahat, 557, 8-10; 657, 22-23; 821, 11; II: 13, 9-11.
213 Aphrahat, 265, 20-24; 268,26-269, 26; 309, 21-27; 1016, 14-27; 1017, 1-27.
214 Aphrahat, II: 17, 12-13.
215 Aphrahat, 392-393; 292-293.
216 Aphrahat, 552, 10-12.
217 Aphrahat, 269, 7-8; 272; 680; 684.
218 Cf. Aphrahat, 552, 8-10.

f. Marriage in the Old Testament

For Aphrahat the question of marriage revolved around life or death. In the state of sin everything is death but in righteousness and purity everything is life: *Therefore. O fool, be instructed by this, that each of the seeds is clothed in its own body. Never dost thou sow wheat and yet reap barley, and never dost thou plant a vine and yet it produced figs; but everything grows according to its nature.*[219] Everything sown after the fall of Adam until the coming of Christ was sowing of death, for sin *ruled over Adam and over all his progeny. Even over those who had not sinned, even over them did death rule through Adam's transgression of the commandment.*[220] In spite of the innocence, purity and righteousness of Noah and his progeny, the sin of Adam ruled over them. In view of the dominion of death over all human generations, moreover, many holy people in the Old Testament were captivated by the *lust of Eve* and so corrupted their virginity: *Samson was excellent in his Naziriteship and in his virginity, but by his licentiousness he destroyed his Naziriteship. David was beloved in his youth, but in his desire for Bathsheba he transgressed the law and violated the commandments of the ten: thou shalt not covet, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery. Ammon was excellent in his virginity, but by reason of his unclean lust for his sister, Absalom killed him. Solomon was worthy and beautiful in his virginity, but in his old age through his lust*[221] *for women his heart turned away from God.*[222] Immediately after his discussion of the degradation of many of the Bible's holy people, Aphrahat wrote of the meaning of marriage under the dominion of sin and death: *We have heard in the law, 'A man should leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall be one flesh'.*[223] *In truth this prophecy is great and honourable. Does a man after he takes a wife abandon his father and his mother? This is the explanation: when a man has* (not yet) *taken a wife, he loves and honours God, his father, and the Holy Spirit his mother, and has no other love. But when a man takes a wife, he abandons his father and his mother,* (namely) *those things which are mentioned above, and his mind is captivated by this world. His mind, heart, and thought are turned aside from God into the world. He adores and loves it as a man adores the wife of his youth, and separate is the love for her from that for his father and his mother. And it says, 'The two of them should be one flesh'. And this is true, for just as a man and woman become one flesh and one mind, and his mind and thought separate from his father and his mother, so also a man who has not yet taken a wife but remains a single one*[224] *is in one spirit and one*

219 Aphrahat, 364, 18-23.
220 Aphrahat, 992, 19-19; 993, 1-2.
221 The Syriac word means 'lust' and I have replaced the word 'desire' by the word 'lust'.
222 Aphrahat, 837, 19-26; 840, 1-4.
223 *Gen.* 2, 24.

thought with his Father.[225] Aphrahat's phrase, *the wife of his youth*, meant marriage without the will of God because of sin and inexperience.[226] This marriage is cursed by God, for those involved are a wicked people, *growing and dying*, and the *young men are taking wives and begetting children, that when the fathers shall have died the children may rise up in their stead. Now all these things have their use only in this world.*[227] Aphrahat adds, that *barrenness* held sway over marriage contracted in the desire of *youth*. If the *mind is captivated by this world*, it is because of *lust* which *transgressed the commandment*. Aphrah expresses a divide between the earthly and heavenly world, the natural fam and God's family, human marriage and God's marriage. Ultimately man's v came into conflict with God's will. The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* who we baptised in God's name had to follow the will of God and do His will through their unity with Him.

g. The Qyama and the lust of Eve

Aphrahat illustrates the virginity of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* with examples from the Scriptures: *Its model and its image have we found in Scripture.*[228] Scripture provides information about the spiritual identity of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*. For instance, their motivation to celibacy derived from Noah. As Noah and all righteous people avoided the marriage of youth and kept themselves away from the *lust of Eve*, so the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* maintained a separation of the sexes: *If he* (the devil) *inflames them with the lust of Eve, they dwell alone, and not with the daughters of Eve. For it was through Eve that he* (the devil) *came upon Adam, and Adam was enticed because of his inexperience... Therefore, my brethren, if any man who is a single one (ihidaya)*[229] *or a holy one (qaddisha) who loves singleness (ihdayutha),*[230] *yet desires that a woman, a daughter of the covenant*[231] *like himself, should dwell with him, it would be better for him in that case to take* (to wife) *a woman openly and not be made wanton by lust. So also again the woman, if she be not separated from the single one, it is better for her to marry openly.... It is just and right and becoming, that even if a man should be distressed, he should continue alone.*[232]

224 I have changed the translation from 'solitary' to 'single one'.
225 Aphrahat, 840, 5-26; 841, 1-2.
226 Cf. Aphrahat 553-557.
227 Aphrahat, 1017, 10-15; 552-558; 588, 10-12.
228 Aphrahat, 841, 23.
229 I have changed the translation from 'monk' to 'single one'.
230 I have changed the translation from 'solitary life' to 'singleness'.
231 I have changed Gwynn's translation from 'bound by monastic vow' to 'a daughter of the Covenant'.
232 Aphrahat, 256, 22-261, 14.

Aphrahat insisted that the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* should remain continually aware of the primary cause of human corruption, the *lust of Eve*, and should avoid the weakness of Adam and many other Old Testament figures.[233] One cannot overstress the fact that the perpetual fight of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* against the *lust of Eve* was an important and basic element of their spirituality. The decision not to succumb was one of the foundations of their life of holiness and purity.

h. The harmonic relation between virginity and marriage

In his works, Aphrahat made no reference to marriage in the Church after the ime of Jesus Christ; all the examples which he used to teach the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* were taken from the Old Testament.[234]

1. On the evidence of his work, Aphrahat was perfectly rooted in the spirituality of the Syrian Church which considered marriage holy and pure and did not value devout celibacy over and above marriage. A summary of Syrian Christian teachings on the subjects of marriage and devout celibacy was written by Ignatius of Antioch to Polycarp: *Flee from evil arts, but rather preach against them. Speak to my sisters that they love the Lord, and be content with their husbands in flesh and spirit. In the same way enjoin on my brothers in the name of Jesus Christ 'to love their wives as the Lord loved the Church'. If any man can remain in continence to the honour of the flesh of the Lord let him do so without boasting. If he boast he is lost, and if it be made known except to the bishop, he is polluted. But it is right for men and women who marry to be united with the consent of the bishop, that the marriage be according to the Lord and not according to lust. Let all things be done to the honour of God.*[235]

2. For Aphrahat marriage and virginity are complementary rather than contradictory. Marriage was, in a sense, the fulfilment of virginity; all Aphrahat's examples of virginity and marriage are taken from the Old Testament and they present virginity as the only acceptable pre-marital state. The virginity of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*, however, was not necessarily seen as leading to marriage. Although there is no clear evidence, no reason is given to forbid marriage between true virgins--i.e. those completely free from *lust of Eve*--among the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*. The example of Noah, much admired by Aphrahat, and the high place accorded to marriage both by the Syrian Church and by Aphrahat, permit the suggestion that to be a virgin, or a celibate devoted to God, does not mean that the way of marriage is completely closed. Indeed, one may conjecture that some of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* were allowed to be married, on condition that they had the *innocence* and

233 Aphrahat, 260, 20-24; 261, 1-14.

234 The relevant references and texts are cited in the section on the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*.

235 Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Poly.* 5.

righteousness of Noah. Some of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* were indeed married, but they separated themselves from each other because of *lust* and corruption in their married life. Marriage and virginity, however, were united in the struggle against *lust* and wickedness.

3. Virginity as a source of life was destroyed when the earth was spoiled by the sin of Adam. Since that time, everything has been in travail, for the earth does not offer or sustain life merely by virtue of its innate purity and virginity; rather, it is sown by the hand of Adam.[236] Adam, therefore, *sows* the marriage of the sinful. Virginity was originally pure in itself and did not need salvation; but the marriage of the children of Adam is spoiled by the *lust of Eve*. Those wh are virgin are *unsown*, and when they *are born* they spring up unconceive similarly, people who marry in their *youth*, like their father Adam, *are sown a wait for* their salvation. The antithesis of virginity and sinful marriage based *lust* was frequently mentioned by Aphrahat. On the other hand, virginity and tru marriage, like the marriage of Noah, were considered to be in perfect harmony.

4. Some phrases from Aphrahat give virginity priority over marriage: *He* (God) *created intercourse worldly procreation, and it is very good; but virginity is more excellent than it.*[237] Virginity was the state of creation before the fall of Adam and Eve and so is superior to everything, especially sinful marriage. For Aphrahat it was an ideal of total purity belonging to all those united to God, both married and single. An example is found in the Old Testament, where the virginity of Adam and the earth, is *transgressed* by Adam's behaviour towards Eve. And yet God later found in Noah and his progeny the *blessed people* who were able to preserve themselves from the *destruction* of all the human race, inaugurated by the Fall of Adam, people worthy to prepare for the coming of the Messiah: *Now if he* (Noah) *had taken a wife before God spoke to him, he would have fathered children like his fathers, for barrenness did not bear sway over him, for at that time the children of Adam were blessed to be fruitful and multiply in their generations, so that from them the earth might be filled. Noah... preserved his innocence... so that he might be the father of righteous and upright men. The Holy Spirit chose him so that even the Messiah, the life-giver of the world, who would annul the curse of Adam, would be born from his seed... From Noah came a second world, because he preserved his innocence in the generation of destruction.... From Noah was born the faithful man, the head of the righteous, Abraham, who kept the law* (even) *before the law was given. He fathered Isaac, the son of the promise, and Jacob, the head of the people...*[238]

The mission of Noah was to re-establish the purity of marriage which Adam had corrupted, and beget for God a new race of innocent and righteous people:

236 Aphrahat, 372, 7-19.
237 Aphrahat, 837, 9-11.
238 Aphrahat, 553,17-27; 556,1-27; 557,1-14ff.

Now tell me, O debater of Israel, how did the blessing of Adam help? For they corrupted their way and were blotted out by the water of the flood. They corrupted the nature of marriage and were condemned, and the blessing was extinguished by the sins of iniquitous men. Noah with a small number, though not numerous, built the altar and aroused the compassion of the Holy One. Noah was better in his few members than the whole generation of destruction, and from him was founded a second world. Furthermore, Noah was blessed that his descendents should multiply, so that the world might be filled, and men might be numerous...[239] In Aphrahat *blessed marriage* is engaged in precisely the same struggle against *the lust of Eve* as virginity. Both aim at uniting the human being with God. The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* cannot be understood without reference to Aphrahat's complex view of marriage and virginity.

i. Jesus Christ, the New Testament and Virginity

As a celibate and a virgin man, Jesus Christ is absent from Aphrahat's *Demonstrations.* His celibacy is not mentioned in any writings that directly concern the virginity of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama.* This avoidance of Jesus Christ's celibacy as a model is important in the development of the theology of virginity in Aphrahat and in the Syrian Church as a whole.

i 1. Betrothal to Christ

For those that take not wives shall be ministered to by the Watchers (angels) of heaven. Those that preserve holiness (qaddishuta) shall rest in the sanctuary of the Most High. The Only Begotten (iḥidaya) who is from the bosom of His Father shall cause all the single ones (iḥidaye) to rejoice. There is there neither male nor female, neither bound nor free,[240] *but they all are the children of the Most High. And all the pure virgins who are betrothed to Christ shall light their lamps*[241] *and with the Bridegroom shall they go into the marriage chamber. All those that are betrothed to Christ are far removed from the curse of the Law, and are redeemed from the condemnation of the daughters of Eve; for they are not wedded to men so as to receive the curses and come into the pains. They take no thought of death, because they do not deliver children to him. And in place of a mortal husband, they are betrothed to Christ. 'And because they do not bear children, there is given to them the name that is better than sons or daughters.*[242] *And instead of the groans of the daughters of Eve, they utter the songs of the Bridegroom...*[243]

239 Aphrahat, 821, 2-13ff.
240 *Gal.* 3, 28.
241 *Mt.* 25, 10.
242 *Is.* 56, 5.
243 Aphrahat, 268, 26-269, 20.

Some scholars believe that this passage from Aphrahat is evidence that the virginity of the *Bnay* and *Bnat Qyam*, who are betrothed to Christ, was founded on Christ's own virginity. Nothing in this text, however, specifies a particular or unique spirituality. *The Bridegroom*, *the bridal chamber*, *the wedding feast* and *the betrothal* of Christians and/or virgins to Christ are typical features of the baptismal liturgy of the Syrian Church.[244] Aphrahat's context was resurrection and that context has a relation to the sacrament of baptism. Aphrahat explained the virginity of the *Bnay* and *Bnat Qyama* by using the baptismal image of the betrothal of the Church to Christ. According to early Syrian theology, *the Church* was betrothed to Christ and personified as *the bride adorned for the Lord God*;[245] Aphrahat had already mentioned this betrothal in reference ' other Christians as well as to his *Qyama*: *He* (Christ) *is the Bridegoom and i Apostles are the 'Betrothers', and we are the Bride; let us prepare c dowry.*[246] Aphrahat is close to Paul: *I betroth you to Christ to present you as pure bride to her one husband*;[247] and to Hosea: *And I will betroth you to me for ever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord.*[248]

The betrothal of the *Bnay Qyama* and the *Bnat Qyama* to Christ fought sinful marriage, which is under the curse of the Law: *All those that are betrothed to Christ are far removed from the curse of the law, and are redeemed from the condemnation of the daughters of Eve; for they are not wedded to men so as to receive the curses and come into the pains...*[249] Because of the *lust of Eve* which made Adam fail in his *youth*, the curse of the Law was established: *Therefore, brethren, because we know and have seen that from the beginning it was through woman that the adversary had access unto men, and to the end he will accomplish it by her--for she is the weapon of Satan, and through her he fights against the champions. Through her he makes music at every time, for she became as a harp for him from the first day. For because of her the curse of the Law was established, and because of her the promise unto death was made. For with pagans she bears children and delivers them to death. Because of her the earth was cursed, that it should bring forth thorns and tares.*[250] The betrothal of

244 Cf. Baptism in the *Odes of Solomon*, 6, 8-10; 17, 8-11; 22, 7-10.21; 24, 3-10; 31, 1-13; 33, 1-2; 39, 1-12; 42, 10-13; 6, 3; and in the *Acts of Thomas*, 27; 37; 49; 50; 52; 121; 131; 132; 157; 150; cf. also Brock, *Holy Spirit*, 51-52.

245 *Didascalia*, 103; cf. also Murray, *Symbols*, 131-158.

246 Aphrahat, 681,26-684,1. The translation is from Murray, *Symbols*, 131.

247 *2Cor.* 11, 2.

248 *Hos.* 2, 19-20.

249 Aphrahat, 269, 10-20; 244, 12-13.

250 Aphrahat, 265, 3-14; cf. 128, 3-12; 185, 17-18; 324, 6-21; 425, 25-425,6; 441, 5-6; 516, 17-18; 549, 17-21; 592, 15-26ff; 873, 12-20; 901, 17-20.

the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* to Christ was never opposed to holy marriage, but their virginity joined with *blessed marriage* to combat sinful marriage: *They are not wedded to men so as to receive the curses and come into the pains. They take no thought of death because they do not deliver children to them. And in the place of a mortal husband, they are betrothed to Christ...*[251] The word *iḥidaya* was used in the Syrian Church to describe Christ and the single, confined ascetic. Consequently, it is of major importance for the study of celibacy. There is no direct evidence that *iḥidaya* was used by Aphrahat to link the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama's* virginity to Christ's celibacy. The basis of their choice cannot be traced to the celibate life of Jesus Christ, nor to the virginity of His mother Mary.[252]

i 2. Old and New Testaments

The main source of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama's* virginity was the Old Testament. Aphrahat's development of this form of spirituality was in accordance with the theology of his Syrian Church.[253] Early Syrian theology discerned three stages in the process of human salvation: 1) the pure and original state of man before the Fall; 2) the fall of man after the sin of Adam, and 3) the complete redemption of man by Jesus Christ. Theologically speaking, the first and the third states are virtually identical. The second state is subdivided into men corrupted by their darkness who do not want to repent and return to God, often identified with pagans, and those who wish for reconciliation with God. The Old Testament contains examples of both groups.[254] The *Didascalia* called the Second Legislation, or the law of purity, the result of sin which led to death.[255] They lived at the time of the *old man*, characterised by ignorance and darkness.Aphrahat's theology reflected the early Syrian view on the salvation of man, and saw the state of man before the fall of Adam as one of virginity and total purity. In the *Demonstrations*, whenever Aphrahat speaks of Old Testament sin and grace, rebellion and submission, or corruption and purity, he also mentions the Old Testament story of salvation. In Aphrahat, as well as in Syrian theology more generally, the Old Testament history of salvation is regarded as a fight between God and rebellious sinners, His grace and Adam's sin.[256] The

251 Aphrahat, 269,12-16.

252 From the time of St. Ephrem, who wrote of Mary as a type of the 'virgin Church', Mary became an important symbol in the development of the theology of virginity in the Syrian Church. Cf. Murray, *Symbols*, 148-149. But this theology has no place in Aphrahat's work.

253 John the Baptist was also a model for the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*, (cf. Aphrahat, 264,23; 289) though he is a transitional figure between the Old and New Testaments.

254 Theophilus of Antioch, *the Acts of Thomas*, *Didascalia*, Tatian, and *the Odes of Solomon* deal directly with this problem of sin and repentance in the Old Testament. The evidence of the history of salvation in the Old Testament is present in almost every chapter of these Syrian works.

255 Cf. *Didascalia* in this work p. 16.

Law was imposed on sinners to educate them in the fear of God;[257] this included the righteous[258] because the period of the Old Testament was one in which death predominated. Jesus Christ abolished this old Law and established a new one based on love.[259] Christ unified everything in Himself, and the old and the new covenants became one.[260]

i 3. The Sinful Bnay and Bnat Qyama

The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* were urged by Aphrahat to *meditate* on the new law of Christ, the *Law of love.*[261] Their life of *virginity* and *holiness* was based on the Old Testament struggles to remain pure whilst under the dominic of *death* and the *Second Legislation*, but it also sought to reflect the spiritual of the New Testament. Firstly, the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* were not free fr the *sin of Adam*, despite their Christian baptism, and their *vow* of virginity ar holiness was aimed at combatting the *sin of their old man* in the pursuit of perfect purity. The relationship in Aphrahat's work between the *sin of Adam*, which held supremacy in the Old Testament, and the choice of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*, roots their *virginity* in the context of Old Testament *sin, death*, and *repentance*. Equally, however, the goal of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* was to be worthy of Jesus Christ, *the Messiah who would annul the curse of Adam*,[262] and abolish the Law of the Old Testament. Yet Christ was not the model of their virginity and His example was not evoked in this respect. Though they were basically motivated by the Old Testament, their aim was to achieve the New Testament spiritual standards of love and purity. Further, we have already seen how, in Aphrahat and more widely in the Syrian Church, baptism was the birth of the *new man*, the man of Christ, made free from sin and darkness.

The secondary place played by the Messiah in the virginity of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* suggests that they were still regarded as insufficiently pure; they were still in the process of distancing themselves from the lust of Eve in order to be freed from the sin of Adam and therefore to achieve a state of maturity in God. Their spirituality of virginity and holiness was based largely upon the Old Testament history of salvation, as their struggle was against the old man who remained inherent within their *new man*, despite baptism. The state of the *Qyama* contradicts the teaching of Aphrahat, who argued that baptism was the end of the *old man* and the beginning of the *new man*. But we know that, from the fourth century onwards, as the Syrian Church became socially more

256 Particularly relevant are *Demonstrations* II, III, V, XI, XIII.
257 Aphrahat, 48, 17-20; 49; 52, 1-9.
258 Aphrahat, 49-51, 9 ff; 52, 10-26.
259 Cf. Aphrahat, 57, 23-24; 61, 14-22; 65, 14-18; 72; 96, 12-15; 60, 13-14; 517, 1.
260 Cf. Aphrahat, 57, 3-14.
261 Aphrahat, 312, 17-18; 252, 23-26; 349, 5-7; 416, 17-19; 433, 4-6, 11-12; 96, 12-15.
262 Aphrahat, 556, 8-10; 652, 13-14; II: 8, 8-26ff.

powerful, many converts were baptised without being truly ready for this sacrament. The Church began to be troubled by internal corruption and slackness in pursuit of the Christian life and the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* seem to have been directly concerned with this situation.

3. HOLINESS

Aphrahat was greatly concerned with *holiness (qaddishuta)* and discussion of this quality took place within the context of sexuality and continence: *I shall show you that virginity and sanctity (qaddishuta: holiness) were worth more before God among that people, that prior people, than much procreating, which profited naught. From the time that his master spoke with the man Moses, the great prophet, the leader of all Israel, he loved sanctity (qaddishuta) and served the Holy One. He held himself back from the world and from procreating, and abided by himself, so that he might please his master. But show me: What do you say, O wise debater of the people? From the time that God spoke with Moses did he perform the duties natural to marriage? And if you bring against us a perverse argument, I shall not be tricked by your provocation, for you want to render the Holy One (qaddisha) unclean on account of your licentiousness. If he had carried out the duties of marriage, he would not have been able to serve the majesty of his master, as Israel was unable to receive the message of the Holy One and the living words which the Holy One spoke with Moses on the mountain, until he had sanctified (qaddsheh) the people for these days. Then Holy One spoke with them. He said to Moses, 'Go down to the people and sanctify (qaddesh) them for three days'.*[263] *Thus Moses openly declared to them, 'You should not draw near to a woman'.*[264] *When they had been sanctified (etqaddash(w)) these three days, then, on the third day, the Holy One revealed himself in powerful radiance, in great glory, with a mighty noise, with frightful thunder, with a loud trumpet, with strong lights, and with brilliant lightning.... Moses was speaking and God was answering him with a voice. Israel stood on that day in fear, trembling, and dread. They fell on their faces, for they were not able to bear (it), and said to Moses, 'Let not God speak with us so, that we may not die'.*[265] *O stubborn man, who is vexed by these things and stumbles! ... how was it possible for the man Moses, the prophet, the clear eye of the entire people, who was standing all the time before God, speaking with him mouth to mouth, to be married? And if God spoke with Israel, that had sanctified (etqaddash(w)) itself for only three days, how much better and more beloved are those who through all their days are sanctified (mqaddshin), alert, prepared, and standing*

263 *Ex.* 19, 10.
264 *Ex.* 19, 15.
265 *Ex.* 20, 19.

before God! Should God not all the more love them and his spirit dwell among them...[266] This is the main text of Aphrahat concerning the *qaddishe* (saints) among the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama.* Before considering this subject in more detail, some mention of Moses and his people should be made.

a. The Sinful people

1) The people of Israel, led by Moses, were sinful and their *rebellion angered God so that they were unable to enter the Promised Land.*[267] Moses ofte accused them of being *rebellious before the Lord, 'a people whose mind is lc among whom is no understanding'. Further he said, 'They have outraged with their idols, and with their gods they have provoked me...' And Mo further said to them, 'I know that after my death you will certainly becor corrupt, and you will turn aside from the way which I have commanded you.'*[268] These people of Israel were self evidently under the *sin of Adam* and in the world of *death.*[269] 2) Being under the *sin of Adam*, the Israelite followers of Moses were corrupted by *the lust of Eve*,[270] and unable to speak to God because they were not pure. The continence of the people of Israel for three days was a time of purification from the sins of the Fall. 3) The Israelite's sexual fasting for three days finds a parallel in the *Acts of Thomas* which obliged married people to refrain from all sexual relations before baptism because of their corruption and need for purification.[271] Aphrahat strongly emphasized the relationship between the glory of God, manifested to Moses on the mountains, and the glory shining in the mystery of the resurrection in baptism.[272]

b. Qaddishuta

The word *qaddishuta*, from the root *qdsh*, which means holiness, sanctity, sanctification, consecration (chastity, virginity, celibacy) is used to identify one of the most important qualities manifested by the people of God when He is with them.[273]

266 Aphrahat, 824, 25-829, 18.

267 Aphrahat, 824, 22-24.

268 Aphrahat, 852, 18-853,7ff; cf. *Deut.* 9, 24; 31, 28.

269 Aphrahat, 992, 8-12; 104, 4-9, 19-23; 164, 1-6; 336, 2-11; 392, 23-26; 445, 22-27; 448, 1-7; 772, 17-20.

270 In the last section we saw that the fall of Adam was caused by his 'lust of Eve'; that sin, therefore, had been upon Adam and his children from the beginning of the world until the time of Christ.

271 *Acts of Thomas*, 150.

272 Aphrahat, 825, 23-828, 19.

273 Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 489-490. It is important to understand 'chastity, virginity, celibacy' accurately, for they do not exactly correspond to 'holiness' (qaddishuta), though in the language of the ascetics, chaste celibacy, subsumed in the larger context of virginity rooted in resurrection, is closely linked with a broad interpretation of 'qaddishuta' or 'holiness'.

- God Himself is the *qaddisha*, the *Holy One*, who is sanctified by his holy people.[274]

- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the *Holy of Holies*.[275]

- The *Holy Spirit* is our *Mother*.[276]

- The people of God, who are His *Church*, are *holy* for they are *sanctified* by the Holy One.[277]

- The city of God is the *Holy City*.[278]- God's *holy house* is His *Holy Temple*.[279]

- The Book of God which is His Law, is *holy*.[280]- God's name is *holy*.[281]- The priests of God and their ministry are *holy*.[282]

- Everything from God is *holy*.[283]

- Work and rest are *holy*.[284]

- The *Qyama*, the covenant of God is *holy*.[285]

Holiness in Aphrahat does not concern only the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*. It extends to the whole Church, as it signifies the purity and sanctity of God's people. The *holy* presence of God is a sign of purity and perfection and in Aprhahat *qaddishuta* is mentioned in relation to the fight against impurity.[286]

274 Aphrahat. I: 100, 19-21; 128, 9-10; 732, 21; 664, 3; 828, 11-16; 829, 10-13; 616, 13; 141, 23-26; 877, 10-15, 22-25; 537, 14; 805, 18-19; 877, 17-18; 881, 4-5; 868, 10-11; II: 100, 20-21; 877, 11-12; 105, 25; 425, 21-22; 469, 4; 473, 3; 477, 11; 481, 5; 496, 17; 505, 1; 508, 8; 525, 7; 545, 11; 560, 16; 593, 1; 621, 4, 25; 625, 12, 23; 641, 24; 644, 7; 733, 21; 741, 24; 845, 1; 857, 6-7; 993, 19.

275 Aphrahat, 684, 24; 877, 7-15; 880, 23; 805, 18-19; II: 100, 19-21.

276 Aphrahat, 296, 3-4, 13; 297, 22, 26; 300, 26; 301, 4; 308, 21; 404, 15-19; 425, 23-25; 525, 1-4; 529; 556, 8; 840, 12 ('and the Holy Spirit his mother'); 300, 10; 485, 13; 960, 25-26; 984, 7-8; II, 64, 20, 24; 92, 22-23; 128, 15; 133, 6.

277 Aphrahat, 824, 25-27; 825; 828, 13, 25-26ff; II: 100, 19-21; 21, 17-18; 128, 9-13; I: 732, 21-26; 733, 1-16; 664, 3; 828, 11-16; 616, 11; 141, 23-26; 245, 14-16; 144, 1-6; 404, 15-19; 525, 1-4; 529; 984, 7-8; 133, 22; 232, 3-6; 248, 4-7; 649, 19-20; 769, 19; 224, 24-25; 241, 20; 1013, 21; 1020, 18-19; II: 13, 23-24; 793, 23.

278 Aphrahat, 877, 10-18, 22-23; 513, 25; 805, 18-19; 881, 5-4; 868, 10-11; 880, 19; 881, 12-13; 884, 22; 192, 2; 248, 10.

279 Aphrahat, 525, 1-4; 864, 17; 868, 10-11; 221, 10; 228, 9; 972, 16, 20; 241, 20; 1013, 21; 133, 19; 144, 6-7; 221, 2; 416, 22; 845, 16; 224, 17-18; 661, 20; II: 112, 2.

280 Aphrahat, 121, 8, 21; 124, 10; 545, 11; 693, 25; 772, 6; 1, 7; 8, 45; 97, 5; 620, 14; 712, 24-25; 756, 11-12; 916, 1-2; 1045, 18; 1048, 15; 1049, 4.

281 Aphrahat, 733, 14; 105, 25.

282 Aphrahat, 825; 616, 6-13; 141, 23-26; 144, 1-6; 57, 21-23; 526, 1-4; 261, 15-18; 593, 1; 613, 25; 616, 13; 625, 12; 641, 24; 684, 6; 689, 7; 616, 6.

283 Aphrahat, 732, 21-26; 733, 1-16.

284 Aphrahat, 541, 3-5; 621, 9-14.

285 Aphrahat, 817, 2-3; 916, 12-13; 588, 13; 260, 13-14; 248, 4-7; 829, 10-13; 268, 26; 265, 20-267, 11; 272, 22; 356, 6-9.

c. Categories of the Bnay and the Bnat Qyama

The *qaddishe* or *holy ones* among the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*, were married people who separated themselves from their partners because of their sinful married life: *And also whatever man desires to continue in holiness, let not his spouse dwell with him, lest he turn back to his former condition, and so be esteemed an adulterer.*[287] Although they belong to the same community, the *virgins* and the *holy ones (qaddishe)* are separate within the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*. For the first category of unmarried *virgins*, Aphrahat provides the spiritual example of Noah; and for the second *holy ones*, who were already married, he offers Moses as an example. Aphrahat also refers to the *ihidc Bnay Qyama*, (the *single ones* of the *Bnay Qyama*), possibly implying two categories,[288] just as virginity and holiness *(qaddishuta)* are separated within the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* overall.[289]

d. Qaddishuta and Continence

Holiness was linked to virginity, as the goal of both was the purity of man: *For this it is written, my beloved, concerning Moses, that from the time the Holy One was revealed to him, he also loved holiness (qaddishuta), and from the time he was sanctified, his wife ministered not to him.*[290] This time of holiness in the life of Moses is considered in *Demonstration* XVIII *on Virginity and Holiness*, as a life of continence: *I shall show you that virginity and holiness (qaddishuta)*[291] *were worth more before God among that people, that prior people, than much procreating, which profited naught. From the time that his master spoke with the man Moses, the great prophet, the leader of all Israel, he loved holiness and served the Holy One. He held himself back from the world and from procreating, and abided by himself, so that he might please his master.*[292] Aphrahat continues: *If the people of Israel, with whom God spoke for only one hour, were unable to hear the voice of God until they had sanctified themselves three days... how was it possible for the man Moses...*[293] *who was standing all the time before God speaking with him mouth to mouth, to be married?*[294] *To be married*, however, does not mean the whole ceremony of

286 Aphrahat, 825ff; 864, 17; 404, 15-19; 425, 23-25; 292, 22-23; 296, 1-3ff; 224, 17-18.
287 Aphrahat, 260, 22-24; 261, 1.
288 Aphrahat, 272, 22; 356, 8-9.
289 Aphrahat, 260-268; 817, 2-3; 824-828.
290 Aphrahat, 261, 15-18.
291 I have altered the translation from 'sanctity' to 'holiness'.
292 Aphrahat, 824, 25-27; 825, 1-6.
293 In spite of his humility and similarity to Christ, Moses was under the sin of Adam, for Christ had not yet come; cf. Aphrahat, 992, 8-12ff; for the life of Moses, Aphrahat, 4, 15-16; 36, 2-4; 57, 3-12; 104, 4-9ff; 164, 1-6; 409, 1-2ff; 445, 4ff; 456, 4-6; 853, 1ff; 957, 11ff; II: 33, 4ff.
294 Aphrahat, 828, 25-26; 829, 1-8.

marriage but, according to the Syriac word *shawtaputa*, refers only to marital intercourse. Evidently, holiness and non-intercourse (continence) are linked and Aphrahat had already identified the intentions of holiness and virginity as the withdrawal from the corrupt world of men as well as a state of purity enabling a more complete worship of God. In Aphrahat and Syrian spirituality in general the *world* meant the complete negation of the *kingdom of God*,[295] though the word requires careful interpretation, as it is also used to represent the the *world* of God as manifested in the lives of His believers. Marriage and intercourse in he *world* of sin and corruption were rejected by Aprahat because they were acts f death, not life.

We have already seen that, from the fall of Adam and Eve until the coming of Christ, all human generations were under the dominion of *death* because of the *lust of Eve*; intercourse and procreation, therefore, were in the same state of sin. Thus, *holiness (continence)* and *virginity* were the tools which the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* used to purify themselves from the *world* of sin and death.[296] In this respect, Aphrahat followed the teaching of his Syrian Church, which saw *qaddishuta* as a life of purity with God.[297] The *Didache* speaks of holiness as the way of life with God, opposed to the world of sin: *Let grace come and let this world pass away. Hosannah to the God of David. If any man be holy, let him come! If any man be not, let him repent: Maran atha, Amen.*[298] The book of the *Didascalia* also concurred with the teaching of Aphrahat: *Indeed, many of them* (the heretics) *were teaching that a man should not take a wife, and were saying that if a man did not take a wife, this was holiness. And through holiness they glorified opinions of their heresies.*[299] In conclusion, *qaddishuta* in Aphrahat refers to married people who have separated themselves from their partners for the sake of purity. Moreover, *holiness (continence)* and *virginity* are closely linked even though they are terms used to describe different categories of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*.[300]

295 Aphrahat, 41, 16-18; 49, 5; 92, 16-17; 96, 3-6; 100, 5; 212, 20-23; 213, 10-11; 216, 4ff; 241, 16; 244, 22; 245, 25; 248, 19; 249, 2-3; 252, 24; 301, 12-14; 305, 17-26; 360, 6-8; 392, 17ff; 413, 11-12; 416, 19-20; 421, 16-18; 453, 14-15; 549-553; 577, 16; 608, 15; 612, 25-27; 613, 23; 625, 20-22; 629, 27f; 637, 15; 709, 20-22; 721, 14-20; 801, 17; 825, 5; 836, 9-10, 20-21; 837, 1-11; 840, 15-18; 841, 9-18; 844, 5; 981, 20-21; 996, 9-11; 1001, 17-18, 21; 1004, 3-7; 1005; 1012; 1009, 12, 26; 1013, 6; 1017; 1028, 1; 1040, 6; II: 12, 16; 13, 9; II: 25, 25f; 28-40; 72, 27; 93, 7-10; 125, 19-20; 144, 19-20.

296 Aphrahat, 549, 11-12; 825, 3-6; 829, 7-8; II: 37-40; 57.

297 Ignatitus of Antioch, *Eph.* 9,2; *Mag.* 31; *Tral. Intro*; *Rom.* Intro; *Smyr. Intro*; *Acts of Thomas*, 85; 104; 126; 139; *Didache*, 10, 6; *Didascalia*, 222; 224; 230; 231; 173; 242; *Odes of Solomon*, 13, 3.

298 *Didache*, 10, 6.

299 *Didascalia*, 230.

300 One may discern the extent to which Aphrahat considers 'holiness' synonymous to 'virginity' when he speaks of marriage, purity and intercourse.

4. THE WAY TO HEALING

In line with Syrian spirituality in general, Aphrahat thought that every baptised person who stood up in the risen Christ should never fall again into sin. He should always remain vigilant against the Evil One and so maintain his purity. Thus, Aphrahat was concerned to warn the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* against relapsing into sin and therefore betraying their baptismal pledge.

a. Fight

Fight, according to Aphrahat, was a word that signified a struggle against s and every Christian should perpetually fight against the Evil One, to receive t crown of glory: *There are many who run in the stadium, but only one receive the crown.*[301] Thus, Aphrahat warns the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*: *All this I have written to you, my beloved, because in our generation there are some who pledge themselves to become single ones, and covenanters and holy ones,*[302] *and it is we who carry on the contest against our adversary. And our adversary fights against us to turn us back to the nature which we, of our free will, separated ourselves from.*[303] The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama have been chosen for this contest* before their baptism,[304] and their fight should therefore be one devoid of worldliness: *The man who has emptied himself is suitable for fighting, because he does not remember what is behind him or turn back to it.*[305] Moreover, the *Bnay* and *Bnat Qyama* were chosen to *restrain the strength of* (their) *youth* (for) *they shall rejoice before the Ancient of Days.*[306] They were fighting against the *youth* of Adam and imitating the *virginity of Noah* and the *holiness of Moses*. In conclusion, the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* were not completely pure before their baptism, but still deeply disturbed by the *sin of Adam*, and their baptismal vow, as Aphrahat stresses, represented a battle against this *sin*.

b. Repentance

The seventh *Demonstration* of Aphrahat, a call to repentance,[307] dealt primarily with the life of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* and their baptismal committment to purify themselves from the world of sin: *Take this advice, my beloved, which brings close the penitents and warns the just. This world is* (full of) *grace, and until it comes to an end, repentance is possible. The time is at*

301 *Col.* 2, 14; cf. Aphrahat, 313, 11-12.

302 I have changed the translation from 'chaste' to *holy one*, for the Syriac word is 'qaddishe': 'holy ones', saints' and in Aphrahat this word means also 'chaste, continent'.

303 Aphrahat, 356, 6-12; 348, 1-6; 248, 23-25.

304 Aphrahat, 341, 11-27; 344, 2-26; 345, 6-26; 348, 1-6.

305 Aphrahat, 345, 24-26.

306 Aphrahat, 341, 7-8.

307 Aphrahat, 268, 19; 912, 18-19; 1001, 25-26.

hand when grace will disappear and justice will take its rule: there will be no repentance then; now justice (sits) *silent because the power of grace prevails. But when justice's time comes, grace will not want to accept the penitent, because death is laid down as a barrier for her, and after there is no repentance. Read, my beloved, and learn, know and see that everyone needs repentance to some extent, for many run in the stadium, and the victor receives the crown, and everyone receives his reward in accordance with his labour.*[308]

Aphrahat had already seen the act of repentance as a call to every human being who needs to be healed from the wounds of his sins, which were incurred during his contest with Satan: *Out of all who are born, who have put on the body, there is only one who is victorious, namely our Lord Jesus Christ... Again, there is no one else from the children of Adam who takes part in the contest without being wounded or struck, because sin has reigned ever since Adam transgressed against the commandment;*[309] *it has been struck by many and slain many, but no one, out of (these) many slew it until our Saviour came and removed it and 'fixed it to his cross'. But even though it is fixed on the cross, its 'sting'*[310] *still exists, and pricks many people, until the end comes, when its sting will be destroyed*[311] Equally, however, Aphrahat seems to have accepted that repentance was the only way to cleanse the impurity of sin, and he proposes it as the medicine of healing: *All illnesses have their medicines, and* (can) *be healed once the wise doctor has discovered them. Likewise, those who are wounded in our contest have as a medicine repentance, which they lay on their abscesses, and they are healed.... Thus, my beloved, he who labours in our contest, and his adversary comes against him and wounds him, should be given as a medicine penitence, while the compunction of the wounded person is great. For God does not reject the penitent....*[312]

The flock of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* was apparently divided into two camps, the *just* who considered themselves completely loyal to their *vows* of *virginity* and *holiness*, and the *sinners* who were not yet fully ready to *acknowledge* (their) *sins.*[313] The latter were condemned by the *just* because they did not perceive the danger of *second death*: *Some of us (Bnay Qyama and Bnat Qyama) are beaten, and have got wounded, and when they are defeated they hold themselves victorious; and even though we may recognize their faults, they are people who stay in this mind and are unwilling to draw near to penitence, and as a result of their* (false) *shame they die a second death, and do not*

308 Aphrahat, 360, 5-20.
309 *Rom.* 5, 21.
310 *1Cor.* 15, 55.
311 Aphrahat, 313, 1-316, 5.
312 Aphrahat, 316, 6-26.
313 Cf. Aphrahat, 356, 6-20; 396, 7-9.

remember him who 'feels out consciences'. Aphrahat did not hesitate to depict the sinful state of those ashamed to acknowledge their fault, to help them turn away from such a dangerous path: *A man who has been wounded by Satan should not be ashamed to acknowledge his fault and leave it, seeking out penitence as a medicine. For in the case of the person who is ashamed to show his abscess, it turns into gangrene, and disease extends over his whole body; but, he who is not ashamed has his abscess healed, and he returns to take part in the contest, while the man with gangrene cannot be healed again, and he will n put on the armour he has taken off.*[314] As a result of Aphrahat's teachings, so of these sinners are willing to acknowledge their faults, and return to the flock the *Qyama*: *There is again the man who acknowledges his fault, and is n granted penance - O steward of Christ, give your fellow man penance, and remember that your Lord did not eject the penitent.... O shepherds, disciples of our Lord, shepherd the flock and guide it well; strengthen the sick, support the ill, bandage the broken* (limbs), *heal the lame, and keep the fatlings for the Lord of the flock.*[315]

Aphrahat was taking action in accordance with his spiritual status when he warned *the doctors* of the *Qyama* against their rigid rejection of those who are wounded,[316] and exhorted them not to hold in contempt those seeking repentance: *Let him not scorn any man who is repenting of his sins.*[317] Moreover, Aphrahat, who sides with the *just*, seems to have been worried about the lack of brotherly spirit between the two camps of the *Qyama*; there seems to have been some conflict between the *just* and the *sinners*: *O fatling sheep, do not butt the weak ones, lest you be found guilty at the judgement when our great shepherd comes.*[318] He adds: *You should not hold the man among you who is burdened with some wrong as an enemy, but you should counsel and advise him like a brother, because, once you have separated him from your company, he will be struck by Satan....*[319] Aphrahat divides the *sinners* into two categories: those who refuse to go back to the group of the *Qyama*, and those willing to rejoin them. He is mainly concerned with those in the second group, those who are sincerely seeking repentance. These people need to show their wound, or sin, to the *doctors*. The *doctors*, however, are warned that they should keep this to themselves and not reveal the matter to others, especially not *their enemies*, for this would weaken the morale and reputation of the whole flock:[320] ... *you*

314 Aphrahat, 317, 5-15; 328, 6ff; 332, 13-15ff.
315 Aphrahat, 356, 18-357, 12.
316 Aphrahat, 317, 22-321; 329, 20-332, 12; 357, 12-19.
317 Aphrahat, 273, 25-26; cf. 353, 15-24; 360, 3-4.
318 Aphrahat, 360, 3-4.
319 Aphrahat, 332, 4-9ff; 321, 7-14.
320 Aphrahat, 340, 12-13.

(doctors) *should counsel that he* (the sinner) *does not hide it* (his abscess) *from you; and once he has disclosed it to you, do not make it known, lest, because of it even the victors are thought by the enemy and those who are hostile to be defeated, for the* (battle) *array where there are dead lying prostrate is considered the greatest disgrace of all by their enemies, and* (so) *when there are wounded to be found among them, those who are not wounded heal their sores, without revealing anything about them to their enemies. Whereas if they informed everyone about them, the whole camp would get a bad name,and the king in charge of the army would be angry with those who had laid bare his camp, and he would smite them with blows worse than the ones they had received in battle.*[321]

The concern of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* for *sinners* and for repentance had been their Church's problem ever since its beginning. One may compare Ignatius: *No man who professes faith sins, nor does he hate who has obtained love....*[322] *So then he who does not join in the common assembly is already haughty, and has separated himself....*[323] *It is right to refrain from such men and not even to speak about them in private or in public, but to give heed to the prophets and especially to the Gospel.... But flee from divisions as the beginning of evils.*[324] Ignatius then urges Christians to pray for sinners to repent: *Now for other men 'pray unceasingly' for there is in them a hope of repentance, that they may find God.*[325] Accordingly, Aphrahat's attitude towards sinners among the *Qyama* is found elsewhere in the Syrian Church; thus the *Didascalia*, which predates Aphrahat, uses similar language about sinners: *For we do not believe, brethren, when* (once) *a man has gone down into the water that he will do again the abominable and defiled works of the wicked heathen. For it is manifest and known to everyone, that whosoever does evil after baptism, the same is already condemned to the Gehenna of fire....*[326] *Judge then, bishop, severely as God Almighty, and those who repent receive with mercy as God Almighty....*[327] *But let those who have not sinned continue without sins, lest they also come to have need of weeping and groaning and grief and of forgiveness....*[328]

c. The Sinful Qyama

Aphrahat does not only speak of *sinners* as a separate group within the *Qyama*. The appellation is applied to himself[329] and to all the *Bnay* and the *Bnat*

321 Aphrahat, 320, 1-16; cf. also 321, 7-15.
322 Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 14, 2.
323 Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 5, 2.
324 Ignatius of Antioch, *Smyr.* 7, 1.
325 Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 10, 1; *Eph.* 5, 3; 14, 2.
326 *Didascalia*, 60.
327 *Didascalia*, 63.
328 *Didascalia*, 64.

Qyama.[330] Earlier in his *Demonstrations*, Aphrahat has already made it clear that all the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*, *virgins* and *holy ones* are Christians fighting against the *sin of Adam* within the institution of the *Qyama*. Yet, as we have seen in the *Didascalia* and in Ignatius, the word *sinner* in the Syrian Church was applied only to those who were not baptised or to those who fell into sin after their baptism.[331] Aphrahat does not clearly give the word *sin* any different meaning but, in general, seems to agree with the theology of his Church. We must attempt to understand the spirituality of *Qyama* in the context of *sin*, as Aphrahat presents *virginity* and *holiness* as a fight against sin, particularly the *sin of Adam* which is the *lust of Eve*. There is no doubt that the *vow* before baptism of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* was a *vow* of purity agair sin, as this was the purpose of their *virginity* and *holiness*.

d. Fasting

Pure fasting is precious before God, and it is kept as a treasure in heaven. is a weapon against the Evil One and a buckler against the arrows of the Enemy. What I am saying is not from me but from the holy Scriptures, which from the beginning showed us that fasting was always useful for those who fasted in truth. In fact, my beloved, fasting is not here only from bread and water, but its observances are many: There is certainly the one who fasts from bread and water until he becomes hungry and thirsty. There is the one who fasts to become a virgin, and he is hungry and he does not eat, and he is thirsty and he does not drink, and this fasting is even better. There is the one who fasts in holiness (qaddishuta) and this is fasting. There is the one who fasts from meat and wine and from certain kinds of food. There is the one who fasts by making a fence around his mouth, so that he does not pronounce any hateful words. There is the one who fasts from anger and he curbs his inclination, lest he be defeated (by it). There is the one who fasts from possession, in order to empty himself for his service of God. There is the one who fasts from all kinds of sexual relations (beds), in order to remain vigilant in prayer. There is the one who in suffering fasts from the affairs of this world, so that he will not be struck by the Enemy. There is the one who fasts to be mourning, in order to please his Lord in his suffering. There is the one who gathers all these observances to make them one fasting.[332]

329 Aphrahat, 1040, 25.

330 Aphrahat, 716, 20-21; 573, 15-19; 597, 17-19; 709, 7-11.

331 On 'sin and sinners' in the early Syrian Church, cf. *Didache*, 5, 2; 6; 10; 11, 7; 15, 3; Theophilus of Antioch, I: 2; II: 14; 16-17; 25-35; Tatian, 7; 11; 14-15; 19; *Didascalia*, 35; 60-93; 97-99; 112; 117; 141-142; 151-152; 201-202; 209-210; 215-217; 240; 245; *Acts of Thomas*, 12-15; 28; 31; 34; 36; 37-39; 44-47; 58-59; 64; 69-79; 81; 84; 87; 109 (33); 118; 145.

332 Aphrahat, 97,1-100,9.

Aphrahat concludes this homily by declaring: The Lord *fasted for our sake, and He overcame our Enemy. He ordered us to fast and to keep vigil at every moment, so that with the power of pure fasting, we might attain His rest.*[333] Aphrahat regards *virginity* and *holiness* as acts of fasting because their aim is to purify human nature from the *sin of Adam.*[334] The fact that the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* fasted confirms that they considered themselves *sinners*. Their spirituality of fasting is clearly based on the Old Testament, for the fasting of Jesus Christ is hardly mentioned in the third *Demonstration.*[335] A question that rises here is whether *virginity* and *holiness*, considered as fasting, should last or a whole lifetime, or whether they may be entered into temporarily. It seems possible to interpret Aphrahat either way, for his use of the concept of virginity ambiguous. Fasting for the sake of purity can be temporary and Aphrahat illustrates this with biblical examples such as those of Noah, Adam, Samson, David, Hamnon, Solomon, and Moses.[336]. Once *purity of heart* is achieved through fasting, fasting itself can be abandoned because it has accomplished its purpose.[337] Virginity is understood in this context as a divine means to attain marriage. In the Syrian ascetic tradition, however, *virginity*, *holiness*, and *fasting* are presented as lifelong commitments for the majority of ascetics.

Aphrahat illustrates the ascetic ideal for his *Qyama* with examples from Elijah,[338] Elisha[339] and John the Baptist.[340] Regardless of whether the commitment to *virginity* and *holiness* was intended to be temporary, the *virgins* and the *holy ones* of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* are unambiguously committed, according to Aphrahat, to *fasting from sins* and *evil deeds.*[341] Fasting, therefore, was always an act of repentance, and *virginity* and *holiness* were both consequent upon and yet part of repentance and fasting.[342] Finally, Aphrahat issues a warning to his *Qyama* about those who refrain from food while their hearts remain full of *evil deeds.*[343]

5. CONCLUSION

a) In both Aphrahat and the Syrian Church, marriage does not exclude virginity; rather it is virginity which leads to true Christian marriage. b)

333 Aphrahat, 136, 11-14.
334 Aphrahat, 101, 11-18; 112, 26-27; 113, 1-14; 116, 4-5ff.
335 Aphrahat, 136, 4-14.
336 Aphrahat, 837, 9-840, 4.
337 Aphrahat, 101, 1-14; 104, 4-25; 112, 5-27; 113, 1-11; 116, 18ff; 129, 3-27; 132-136.
338 Aphrahat, 253, 10; 264; 833, 1-7; 836.
339 Aphrahat, 264; 833, 1-7; 836.
340 Aphrahat, 264, 23; 289.
341 Aphrahat, 116-125; 97, 12-14.
342 Aphrahat, 116, 18-117, 22; 108, 6-109, 26.
343 Aphrahat, 121, 21-25; 124, 1-10; 112, 23-27; 113, 1-2; 273, 25-26; 337, 16-27; 528, 9-11; 653, 12-13; 685, 3-4; 696, 6-15; II: 9, 7-22; 4-5.

Virginity is a fight against sin and corruption, in order to keep our human person a pure temple for God.c. Virginity, purity, and resurrection form the basic themes of baptismal spirituality in the Syrian Church. Thus, virginity is a concept of total purity which concerns every Christian, married or single; it is never destroyed by Christian marriage and its sexual component because it can only be destroyed by sin.[344] d) *Those that take not wives shall be ministered by the Watchers of heaven*,[345] and *they are as the angels of God and children of the Resurrection*.[346] According to Aphrahat, this likeness to angels does not only belong to those who *do not take wives*, but also to the *priests*,[347] *strangers*[348] and *martyrs*.[349] e) Aphrahat clearly emphasizes that the fight of the *Qyar* against sin is a fight against the second death which would lead inevitably t complete separation from God. The second death occurs when the sinner plea himself with sin and refuses to return to God through repentance and the pledg of purity. This life of purity is the life to which every Christian is called in the Syrian Church, and the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* in their *virginity* and *holiness* are performing the same duty of purity to which every single or married Christian is bound.

C.WHO WERE THE BNAY AND THE BNAT QYAMA?

Before attempting to identify the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*, it is important to examine the conjectures of other scholars.

1. THE MEANING OF THE WORD 'QYAMA'

a. Covenant - Pact

The word *covenant* seems to be the most satisfactory translation of the word *qyama*; thus the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* are *the sons and the daughters of the covenant*,[350] or simply, *the Covenanters*.[351] *Pact* is also an accurate translation of the word *qyama*,[352] and either word is possible for the translator's purposes.

344 Cf. Aphrahat, 837, 9-26; 840, 1-4; II: 37-38; 857, 19-21; 948, 25-26.

345 Aphrahat, 268, 26-269, 1; 653, 10-13.

346 Aphrahat, 392, 21; 1016, 22-27; cf. *Mt.* 22, 29-32; cf. also Aphrahat, 248, 25-26; 264, 7; 309, 22-24.

347 Aphrahat, 1025, 1-7.

348 Aphrahat, 924, 18-19; 925, 7-11; cf. *Gen.* 18, 9sqq; *Heb.* 13, 2.

349 Aphrahat, 841, 22-26.

350 See a detailed study of this word in Nedungatt, 'The Covenanters of the Early Syriac-Speaking Church', 191-215; Häfeli, *Stilmittel bei Afrahat*, 82-86; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 99; 'Qeiama', 19; Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity*, 128; Murray, *Symbols*, 13; Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, 3533-5; Butler, 'Monasticism', 526; Maude, 'Who Were', 14; Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 110-112.

351 Nedungatt, 'The Covenanters', 191ff.

352 Guillaumont, *Aux origines du Monachisme Chrétien*, 49; Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, 29-31, 302.

The translation of *qyama* as *covenant-pact* is similar to the German *Bund-Bundesbrüder*,[353] or *Bundessöhne* and *Bundestöchter*.[354]

b. Stand - Rise

The word *qyama* derives from a Syriac root meaning *to rise up* and *to stand*, and it might designate the high status of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*; their likeness to the angels of heaven who are always standing before God.[355] At the same time, the word *qyama* cannot mean *resurrection*,[356] which some scholars have suggested, as *qyama* is masculine and the word for resurrection in Syriac is the feminine *qyamta*.

c. Diverse

The word *qyama* is not only used by Aphrahat to refer to the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*, but also refers to Christ who is directly called *qyama*. The Church is also *qyama*, and so is the *covenant* between God and the Patriarchs. In addition, Aphrahat uses the word *qyama* to describe the Old Testament priesthood and circumcision. *Qyama* can be *association, alliance, oath*[357] and *vow*.[358] The word *qyama* is thus not applied specifically to the group of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*, but embraces some elements in the lives of all Christians within the Church.[359]

353 Bert, *Afrahat des persischen Weisen*, 197.

354 Schwen, *Afrahat*, 99.

355 Maude, 'Who Were', 13-14; Murray, *Symbols*, 13; 'The Exhortation to the Candidates', 77; Adam, 'Grundbegriffe', 226-228; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 97, 103; Wensinck, 'Qejama und Benai Qejama', 561ff; Beck, 'Ein Beitrag zur Terminologie', 261; Brock, 'Asceticism', 8; Nedungatt, 'The Covenanters', 193.

356 Nagel, 'Die Motivierung der Askese', 41ff argues that 'qyama' means 'resurrection', but his interpretation does not sufficiently take into account the Syriac roots of these two words 'qyama' and 'qyamta'; cf. Brock, 'Asceticism', 8.

357 Cf. details about these subjects in Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 195-199; cf. also Häfeli, *Stilmittel bei Afrahat*, 82-86.

358 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 99.

359 St. Ephrem: *Contra Haereses*, VI, 19; XXII, 21; *De Ecclesia*, XXI, 5; *Memre on Nicomedia*, *PO* XXXVII, 2-3, 146-147, 310-312; *De Virginitate*, (ed. Rahmani), II, 20ff; *Memre on the Solitaries, S. Ephr. Syr.* (ed. Lamy), t. IV, 245; Rabbula: Overbeck, *Sancti Ephremi Syri. Rabulae episcopi edesseni*, 176, 206, 207; Eusebius of Cesarea, (Cureton), *History of the Martyrs of Palestine by Eusebius*, 3-4; *Bedjan, Acta Martyrum et Sactorum* II, 332, 241, 316-317, 104, 132, 236; IV, 562, 535, VI 219, 311, 182; Howard, *The Teaching of Addai*, 100-101.

2. THE ROLES OF THE BNAY AND THE BNAT QYAMA

a. Monks

Some scholars have translated *Bnay* and *Bnat Qyama* as *monks* and *nuns*,[360] but this is not accurate as the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* were integrated into society, and lived without structured rule or discipline.[361] A distinction must be made between an ascetic and a monk, as every monk is an ascetic, but not every ascetic is a monk. Further, in spite the existence of monks during the fourth century, Aphrahat describes the institution of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* a something distinct from monastic life.

b. Clerics

Some scholars consider the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* to be part of the cle because of their strong hierarchical links.[362] They were often mentioned as fourth category after bishops, priests and deacons. Indeed, some of them were ordained and charged with ecclesiastical ministries.[363] Such close collaboration between the *Qyama* and the clergy does not necessarily mean that the *Qyama* were either a part of the clergy or in minor orders.[364] They were a lay ascetic Christian movement that acted in the service of the Church. While some of its members were found among the clerical ranks, and also possibly monks, the group as a whole remained non-clerical.[365]

360 Parisot, *Aphraatis Sapientis Persae Demonstrationes* I, cf. especially col. 239; Hoffman, *Ausziige aus syrischen Akten*, 34; Gwynn, *Aphrahat*, 157ff; Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse*, 29; Connolly, 'Aphraates and Monasticism', 522-539; Jargy, 'Les fils et les filles du pacte', 304-320, cf. espec. 311; Fiey, *Assyrie Chrtienne* I, 13.

361 Cf. Butler, 'Monasticism', 526; Maude, 'Who Were', 17- 19; Schiwietz, *Das Moregenlädische*, 386-388, 399; Beck, 'Ein Beitrag zur Terminologie', 254-267; 'Asketentum', 341-362; Schwen, *Afrahat*, 99; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 197, 204, 221ff. 229-234; Baker, 'Which came first', 293; 'Syriac and the Origins of Monasticism', 347; Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 419-421; Connolly, 'Aphrahat', 537; Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 109.

362 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 100, 207; 'Qeiama', 25; Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale*, 254; Labourt, *Christianisme*, 29, 302; Assemani, *Acta Martyrum Orientalium*, 89, 134, 135, 144, 149; *Bibliotheca Orientalis* I, t. 3/2, 888; Burkitt, *Early Eastern*, 129, 137-138.

363 In his *Demonstrations*, Aphrahat makes no reference to the relationship between the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* and the clergy; it is attested only in later tradition.

364 I know from first hand experience that Christian movements in the Lebanon always consist of clergy as well as lay Christians, not because the laity form a part of the clergy, but because they are committed Christians who are willing to work in and for their Church as the right hand of the clergy. There may well be a strong similarity between the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* and lay Christian movements in the Lebanon.

365 Cf. Maude, 'Who Were', 18f; Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 203ff; Guillaumont, *Origines du Monachisme*, 49; Butler, 'Monasticism', 526; Brock, 'Asceticism', 7-8.

c. Solitaries

The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* have sometimes been equated with the *iḥidaye*, which has the (purely formal) translation of *solitaries*.[366] The term *solitaries* in English[367] does not accurately apply to the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*, but is only relevant to monks.[368] The members of the *Qyama* took part in the daily social dynamics of their community and church.

3. THE COVENANTERS AND THE NON-SYRIAN ASCETIC MOVEMENTS

The history of Christian asceticism in the Near East during the first centuries of the Christian era records other ascetic movements which flourished concurrently with those in Syria: the *Monazontes*,[369] *Spoudaioi*,[370] *Apotactitai*, *Mansionarii*,[371] and *Watchers*.[372] While the similarities between the *Watchers* and the *Covenanters* seem to be strong, we must be cautious about identifying them as one and the same.[373] As far as can be judged from the available historical sources, the Covenanters of Aphrahat seem to have arisen independently and not as an off-shoot of any other ascetic movement.[374] At the same time, it must be recognised that, as the *Covenanters* were by no means the only ascetic movement in the Near East, some mutual influence among all of these movements would have been a natural consequence of their co-existence.

The recorded traditions of these ascetic movements all reveal that the Bible was the template of their spiritual practice. Many small details of daily life, such as psalmody, vigil, use of food, poverty, and so forth, were naturally similar because they derived from a common source. Yet, it must be emphasized that any similarity between these movements does not necessarily indicate a single identity; nor does it automatically suggest that one movement was derived from another. The false syllogism that the *Watchers* were leading a life of psalmody,

366 Parisot, *Aphraatis*, 261, 4; 272, 21; 276, 19 etc. Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 112-115; Baker, 'Syriac', 347; Connolly, 'Aphrahat', 537; cf. Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 206-209.

367 The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word 'solitary' as: 'One who retires into, or lives in, solitude from religious motives; a hermit or recluse. One who lives by himself in seclusion or retirement; one who avoids, or is deprived of, the society of others. Keeping apart or aloof from society; avoiding the company of others; living alone'.

368 Cf. Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 207-209; Connolly, 'Aphrahat', 537.

369 Cf. Lambert, 'Apotactites et Apotaxamènes', 2604-2626; cf. also Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 422-424.

370 Cf. Petrides, 'Le Monastère des Spoudaei', 225-231; 'Spoudaei et Philopones', 341-348.

371 Cf. Hefélé Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles* II, 2, 774.

372 Cf. Leclercq, 'Vigiles', 3018-3113; Puyade, 'Les heures canoniales syriennes', 416ff.

373 Cf. Labourt, *Christianisme*, 30; Lambert, 'Apotactites et Apotaxamènes', 2610; Adam, 'Grundbegriffe des Mönchtums', 209-239.

374 Cf. Connolly, 'Rules', 153.

fasting, vigil, etc. that the *Covenanters* were leading a similar life, and that therefore the *Watchers* and the *Covenanters* were identical, must be avoided.The Hebrew equivalent of covenant, *berith*, was used by the Qumran community.[375] It might be asked whether Aphrahat's *Covenanters* were originally a development of Qumran asceticism, or an outgrowth from its spiritual influence. There is, however, no evidence of any such direct influence in Aphrahat's *Demonstrations*, or in any other early Syrian tradition that preceded him.[376] The Essenes were not alone in their use of the biblical term *berith*, and it is significant that the phrase, sons of the covenant, *(benay berith)*[377] does n actually occur in the Qumran writings, although it is found in some other Jew writings of the Hellenistic period.[378] Thus it is likely that Aphrahat and *Covenanters* developed the Old Testament meaning of covenant independent enhancing it with the additional nuances that the word *qyama* carried within the Syrian Church.

D. CONCLUSION: THE IDENTITY OF THE COVENANTERS

1. ASCETIC LAY CHRISTIANS

The *Covenanters* were an ascetic lay Christian movement within the Syrian Church.[379] Their spirituality was the spirituality of their Church and their lives contained nothing different from other Syrian Christians, except for their dedicated virginity and continence which were manifestations of their fight against sin.[380]

2. CELIBACY - MARRIAGE

The celibacy and continence of the *Covenanters* is an expression of a struggle against the *sin of Adam* rather than an imitation of Christ's celibacy. They were not the only baptised Christians in the Syrian Church,[381] in which celibacy was never a requirement for baptism.[382] From the first century up to the present

375 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 98-101; Brock, 'Asceticism', 7.

376 The word 'Qyama = Covenant' is mentioned once in the *Odes of Solomon*, 9, 11: 'Put on the crown in the true covenant of the Lord', but this quotation does not help to resolve the problem. Cf. Wensinck, 'Weiteres zu Qejama und Bnai Qjama', 812ff.

377 Cf. Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 215, says: 'Probably the Bnay qyama of the early Syriac Church is the closest Christian equivalent of the Hebrew bnay berith, but with the newness characteristic of the new covenant established in Jesus Christ'.

378 Cf. Brock, 'Asceticism', 7.

379 Cf. Maude, 'Who Were', 20.

380 Cf. Breydy, 'Les Laïcs et les Bnai Qyomo', 51-75.

381 Some scholars have argued that the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* were the only baptised Christians in the Syrian Church, cf. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 127ff; 'Syriac-Speaking Christianity', 499; Harnack, *Die Mission* II, 123; Ploej, 'Eine enkratitische Glosse im Diatessaron', 8; Vööbus, 'Qeiama', 19; *History of Asceticism* I, 13.

382 Vööbus in his article, 'Celibacy as a Requirement for Baptism' argues that the Syrian Church

time, both married and celibate people have been admitted to baptism in the Syrian Church.[383] The *Covenanters* decided of their own free will[384] that celibacy was the best weapon to implement against the *sin of Adam*, the use of which would enable them to inherit the kingdom of heaven promised in the baptismal covenant.[385] They were chosen by the Church from among those who offered themselves for membership prior to baptism.[386]

3. STYLE OF LIFE

Aphrahat reveals little about the daily life of the *Covenanters*. The absence of any special rule for their lives confirms that those celibate from birth (virgins), and those who became continent (holy ones) did not form a body separate from Christian society; what some scholars call 'monastic life'. The *Covenanters* lived in the midst of their society, some with their families and relatives, others in small groups. Furthermore, the specific group organisation of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* was a natural outgrowth of the early Syrian tradition, and the asceticism which was practised by the whole Church, as this included people who led special lives of celibacy and renunciation. Thus the life of the *Covenanters* was not markedly separate from that of the rest of the Church. The only difference was in kind, the *Covenanters* having a more radical dedication to celibacy or continence.[387] Aphrahat emphasizes this spirituality in his teaching:

These things I have written according to what I have attained to. But if anyone shall read these discourses and find words that do not agree with his thought, he ought not to scorn them; because whatsoever is written in these chapters was not written according to the thought of one man, nor for the persuasion of one reader; but according to the thought of all the Church, and for the persuasion of all faith....[388] It is to Aphrahat's credit that he does not simply wish to avoid promoting divisiveness and theological disagreement by his own

during its early days did not allow married people to be baptised.

383 Vööbus' position is now rejected by many other scholars, cf. Murray, 'The Exhortattion to Candidates', 59-80, Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 192-202.

384 Aphrahat, 344, 6-10; 356, 6-9.

385 Aphrahat, 265, 15-269; 356, 6-27; 497, 17ff.

386 Aphrahat, 345, 6-348. Cf. Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 429-444; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 10-11.

387 Cf. Aphrahat, 260, 13-261, 14. The fact that some of them led a common life in small groups does not mean they led a monastic life as we commonly understand that word. Those who believe that they led a monastic life are: Jargy, 'Les fils et filles', 304-320; Fiey, *Assyrie Chrétienne* I, 13; Bert, *Aphrahats Homilien*, 89-90. Other scholars reject this notion: Baker, 'Who came first', 293; 'Syriac', 3, 47; Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 211, 424; Murray, *Symbols*, 14; Connolly, 'Aphraates', 537; Maude, 'Who Were', 18; Connolly, 'Rules', 153.

388 Aphrahat, 1044, 21-1045, 2ff. cf. also Aphrahat's concern to include the *Covenanters* within the spirituality of the Church: 309, 21; 305, 22; 149, 8-11; 181, 21; 285, 15-16; 297, 19; 312, 6-20; 428, 18-21; 45, 9-17; 312, 6-7; 312, 15-20; 453, 20-21; 457, 21-26; 464, 16-465, 19; 693, 6-7; 573; 625, 9-11; 720, 5-6; 929, 1-8; 1040, 21-24ff; II: 148, 9-10; 1043, 21ff.

writings because he also shows that his thought is in harmony with the church's teaching, especially that of the *Didascalia.*[389]

4. CHRISTIAN CLASSES

That the *Covenanters* were a celibate and continent circle inside their church should not cause any surprise,[390] nor should they be called an *elect.*[391] They were merely a group within a Church that considered all of its members the 'elect'. Although their celibacy and/or continence give them particular strength in the fight against the *sin of Adam*, nowhere does Aphrahat imply they are a superior class of Christians, or a community of 'pure' people who reflect the heavenly kingdom in their perfection. The *Covenanters* were a *qyama* within the larger *qyama* of the church,[392] but they did not have any special privileges or status in comparison to married or other lay Christians. The *Covenanters* are the *single ones (ihidaye)*[393] dedicated to *virginity* and *holiness*, for the purpose of uniting the first *covenant* and the second *covenant* in themselves, making *one covenant* with Jesus Christ to ensure their eternal life.[394]

5. WITHDRAWAL

Not all the *Covenanters* who were admitted to the *holy covenant* were able to remain loyal to their oath of virginity and holiness. Aphrahat mentions their infidelities in no uncertain terms: *We know, my dear friend, that many from among our brethren make their oath only to violate it. Under their inducement others, too, swear similarly. This is not only to commit suicide, but to bring death upon others as well. For they violate the commandment which our Saviour taught us.*[395] In another text, Aphrahat shows us that many of the celibate were living together, corrupting the institution of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*. Furthermore, many of the *qaddishe* went back to living with their wives:

389 *Didascalia*, 263- 265; 238; 241; cf. also the *Didache*, 4, 1. Murray, *Symbols*, 23, says: 'Aphrahat several times insists that he is repeating tradition and not making up what he is saying'.

390 Cf. Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 203, 424; Guillaumont, *Origines*, 49; Maude, 'Who Were', 15; Murray, *Symbols*, 14; Connolly, 'Aphrahates', 537; 'Rules', 153; Baker, 'Syriac', 347; 'First', 293. Dom Butler, *The Lausiac History* I, 230, on asceticism in the early Church says: '(Asceticism) did not lead its votaries to withdraw from the world; they carried out the ascetical life in the midst of their families, keeping fasts, abstaining from marriage, and devoting themselves to prayer and good works'.

391 Some scholars call the 'Covenanters', the 'elect' of the Church; cf. Nedugnatt, 'Covenanters', 203.

392 'If the Church is a qyama, there is a 'qyama' within that 'qyama'', Murray, *Symbols*, 200; 203; cf. also Vööbus, 'Qeiama', 19.

393 Connolly, 'Aphrahat', 537, says: 'Evidently the word 'ihidaya', 'solitary', had not in Aphrahates time acquired the special sense of 'hermit', but simply described the *Bnay Qyama* as men living a life of celibacy and renunciation of worldly possessions'.

394 Aphrahat, 57, 3-12.

395 Aphrahat, II: 144, 14-18. The translation is from Nedugnatt, 'Covenanters', 435-436.

Therefore, my brethren, if any man who is a son of the covenant,[396] *or a holy one, who loves the single life,*[397] *yet desires that a woman, a daughter of the covenant,*[398] *should dwell with him, it would be better for him in that case to take (to wife) a woman openly and not be made wanton by lust. So also again the woman, if she be not separated from the single one,*[399] *it is better for her to marry openly. Woman then ought to dwell with woman, and man to dwell with man. And also whatever man desires to continue in holiness, let not his spouse dwell with him, lest he turn back to his former condition, and so be esteemed an adulterer.*[400] Aphrahat is concerned that many *Covenanters* retruned to their former state, breaking their *oath* to God.[401]

The Council of Ancyra (A.D. 314) in Canon XIX, says: *If any person who professes virginity shall disregard their profession, let them fulfil the term of digamists. And moreover, we prohibit women who are virgins from living with men as sisters.*[402] In addition, the Council of Elvira, (ca 300 A.D.) specifically dealt with this problem and sought in its canons to encourage the preservation of virginity.[403] Thus Aphrahat's concern is not merely a personal expression; it is in accordance with the canons of his Church.[404]

6. THE BNAY AND THE BNAT QYAMA IN THE LATER SYRIAN TRADITION

The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* are not mentioned in Syrian tradition before Aphrahat. All other references to them are later than Aphrahat's *Demonstrations.* The following represents a selection of references, largely confined to texts prior to the sixth century.

a. Pseudo-Clementine De Virginitate

De Virginitate, a text which originated in the fourth century, has survived in its entirety only in Syriac. This is not an exact rendition of the original, as later alterations have been interpolated into its text.[405] This Syriac document, containing two letters originally written in Greek, twice mentions the term *bat*

396 I have altered Gwynn's translation from 'monk' to 'son of the Covenant'.
397 Again, I have altered the translation: from 'solitary life' to 'single life'.
398 I have changed 'bound by monastic vow' to 'a daughter of the Covenant'.
399 'Solitary' here has been changed to 'the single one'.
400 Aphrahat, 260, 13-261,1.
401 Aphrahat, II: 129-144.
402 Cf. Maude, 'Who Were', 16f.
403 Cf. Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 434.
404 Cf. Maude, 'Who Were', 16f; Nedungatt, 'Covenanters', 433-438; Achelis, *Virgines Subintroductatae*, 48ff; Koch, *Virgines Christi*, 287ff; Hefélé-Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles* I, 229-322.
405 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 64-65; Quasten, *Initiation aux Pères* I, 69-70.

qyama,[406] and once refers to *bnat qyama*.[407] We do not know the Greek terms on which these Syriac words are based, however, and in any case the Syriac translation is unlikely to have been made earlier than the fifth/sixth century.

b. Saint Ephrem

Saint Ephrem, who lived during the fourth century, also uses the word *qyama* ambiguously. Sometimes it indicates the life of *chastity* and *virginity* specifically demonstrated by the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*,[408] and at other times it seems to refer generally to the Church of God.[409] Ephrem wrote his work after Aphrahat had completed his *Demonstrations*,[410] hence he might possibly have been acquainted with the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*.

c. Rabbula

Rabbula, bishop of Edessa (411-435), transcribed the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama's* first Rule of Life.[411] This Rule is of major importance as it suggests a further development of the ascetic life of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*, and sheds light on the different ascetic movements of the fifth century.

d. Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum

The *Acts of the Persian Martyrs* mentions the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* frequently. They were persecuted, exiled and martyred.[412] Some of the names mentioned are Martha[413], Tarbo,[414] Tagla,[415] Danag, Taton, Mema, Mezakia, Ana, Aviat, Hatai,[416] Mariam,[417] Warde,[418] Narsai.[419] The list of the forty martyrs, which includes two bishops, sixteen priests and nine deacons, contains six *Bnat Qyama* and seven *Bnay Qyama*;[420] one of the *Bnay Qyama* was the

406 *Epistola II Ad Virgines*, 1, 9 (*PG* I, 417-419, 437) = Pratten, (Ante-Nicene Fathers, VIII). The Syriac text has also been edited by Beelen, *Sancti Patris*.

407 *Epistola II Ad Virgines*, 10 (*PG* I, 437-439); Pratten, (Ante-Nicene Fathers, VIII, 55-66).

408 Beck, *Contra Haereses*, XXII, 21; *De virginitate*: Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* I, 134, n. 20.

409 Beck, *Contra haereses*, VI, 19; *Memre sur Nicomédie* (Armenian version), VIII: 553-570, edition and French tr. by Renoux, *PO* 37/2.3, 146-157; 310-312; Lamy, *S. Ephr. Syr. hymni et sermones*, IV, 245.

410 Cf. Gwynn, 'Aphrahat', 161-162.

411 A published version may be found in Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic Documents*, 36-50.

412 Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* II, 104; 132; 182; 233; 236; 245-246; 278; 287-290; 297; 307-308; 316-319; 346; 513; IV 218-219, VI 229.

413 Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* II, 230-233; 236; 238; English translation of the Acts of Martha, Tarbo and Tagla (Thekla) in Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women*, ch. 3.

414 Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* II, 254ff; cf. Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale*, 265.

415 Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* II, 308ff; another Theqla: 288-289.

416 Bedjan II, 288-289.

417 Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* II, 307.

418 Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* II, 290.

419 Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* IV, 170-171.

420 Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* II, 325.

nephew of Bishop 'Abdisho of Kashkar.[421] Elsewhere, it is recorded that the servant of Bishop 'Abdisho of Kashkar had found the holy *Bnay* and *Bnat Qyama* in a village.[422] Lastly, the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* are mentioned as an ascetic people who led a life of prayer along with the saints of the Church,[423] and that they dwelt among ordinary people in chastity and holiness.[424]

e. Eastern Synods

The *Synodicon orientale*[425] is a collection of laws and decisions from the Church of the East (the so-called Nestorian Church), dating from the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries. Some of these texts mention the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama*. It is acknowledged that they imitate Jesus Christ and they are advised to flee from adultery,[426] to live separately from the other sex.[427] They are free to marry, as are the priests, bishops and patriarchs,[428] but they are to remain pure,[429] and poor,[430] submitting to the bishops and priests[431] in unity.[432] In addition, they freely choose their life of virginity,[433] and they submit themselves to strict discipline,[434] either among lay people in society, or among monks in monasteries.[435] They are forbidden to take part in worldly meetings or gatherings,[436] and every heretic among them is subject to excommunication.[437] The possibility of repentance, however, is always open.[438] The *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* are presented as close to the clergy,[439] and are listed after the deacons.[440]

An analogy to the institution and ministry of the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* used in the Synod's texts suggests that they were what we might understand as a third order, with its own discipline, garment and tonsure.[441] The last important

421 Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* II, 332.
422 Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* II, 337; cf. also Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 241.
423 Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* IV, 535; 562.
424 Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* VI 311; 317; 229.
425 Published by Chabot.
426 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 403-404.
427 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 336-338; 362; 416-417; 561.
428 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 264; 406-407; 476; 477.
429 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 312, 336-338.
430 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 281-281; 295; 416-417.
431 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 412; 418-419; 486-487.
432 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 268; 279; 329-330; 379; 456.
433 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 356.
434 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 303
435 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 279; 476-477; 486.
436 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 406-407; 461; 476-477.
437 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 265; 624.
438 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 336-338; 360; 561.
439 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 362; 375.
440 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 303; 312; 330; 332; 404; 426.

point to mention about the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* is their continued persecution by pagans.[442] Many further references to the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* can be found in later texts, but these are of little relevance to the present work.

441 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 330; 360-362; 550.
442 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon orientale*, 486; 295; 404; 406-407; 456; 487.

PART II

THE SYRIAN HERMITS BEFORE CHALCEDON

I. THE MOTIVES OF SINGLENESS

A. THE CALL OF GOD

The life of singleness *(ihidayutha)* is a call from God to those who seek to follow completely the footsteps of His Son, Jesus Christ. *Illuminated in his soul by divine grace,* Julian Saba *foresaw quite clearly the perfection that the young man* (Asterius) *would possess. And he* (Asterius), *a long time later, was called by divine grace to be the trainer of many others in the same virtue.*[1] Publius continually looked for ways to please God who had called him to the eremitic life: *After distributing these* (i.e., *home, property, herds, clothing, vessels of bronze, and everything else that went with them.),*[2] *according to divine law, to those who needed them, and freeing himself from every worldly care, he took on one care to replace them all, the service of the One who had called him, and turning this over in his soul, continued night and day considering and examining how to increase it.*[3] Symeon the Stylite discovered his vocation to the eremitic life after God intervened directly into his life through many visions; he realised that he had been called to the Single life by divine grace:[4] *I shall begin,* relates Theodoret, *from the point at which he* (Symeon) *received his call from on high.*[5] Symeon himself says in his prayer that he is following the call of God in his life: *Oh Lord God, who created me in the womb of my mother as thou didst will, and brought me forth to this light in thy grace, and implanted in my mind thy fear as thou didst will, and didst separate me from the house of my Fathers in thy mercy, and I have borne thy cross and followed thee according to thy word, and thou hast guarded me from evil and from all their powers in the day of my adversity.*[6] Sozomen considers the ascetic life of the hermits as a gift from God to man: *Indeed, the most useful thing that has been received by man from God is their philosophy* (asceticism).[7] St. Ephrem often mentions the divine origin and call of the Single life;[8] the hermits are chosen by God: *Glory to thee Who didst choose them;*[9] he adds: *He Who created two great lights chose for Himself these three lights* (Mar Jacob and his companions), *--and set them in the three dark seasons of siege that have been. When that pair of lights was quenched, the other shone wholly forth.*[10]

1 *HR*, II, 9; tr. 28.
2 Cf. *HR*, V, 1.
3 *HR*, V, 2; tr. 58.
4 Cf. *HR*, XXVI, 3-4; *Syriac Life*, 111-118; *Antony Life*, 493-494.
5 *HR*, XXVI, 1; tr. 160.
6 *Syriac Life*, 122-123.
7 *HE*, I, 12; tr. 247. On the word philosophy, cf. pp. 262-264.
8 Ephrem, *Abraham Qidunaya*, II, 9; III, 4; *Julian Saba*, I, 1; XXIV, 1.
9 Ephrem, *Carmina Nisibena*, XIII, 1; tr. 180.

A recognition of God's call to men to join the Single life can be stimulated by the example of holy people. Asterius, who was himself attracted by the life of Julian Saba,[11] drew many people to the eremitic life, and trained them in the life of mortification.[12] Marianus *made many others his fellow-lovers. He captured the great Eusebius and also his brother.*[13] A sick man who was healed by Peter the Galatian decided to become his healer's companion in order to serve him in his retreat.[14] Zeno *benefited from the streams of his neighbour, the great Basil.*[15] A response to God's call to the eremitic life could also be made b means of a new vow of piety: *Who is ignorant of the resuscitation of a de child that occurred through his prayer? In the suburbs of the city lived a child's parents, who had begotten many children and escorted them a prematurely to the grave. So when this last child was born, the father hastened to the man of God, begging to obtain a long life for it, and promising to dedicate it to God, should it live.*[16]

Theodoret, the author of *Historia Religiosa*, was dedicated to God before his birth, for a human being is a gift from God which should go back to Him alone, through an act of consecration: *In the fifth month of her* (Theodoret's mother's) *pregnancy, there occured a danger of miscarriage. She again sent to her new Elisha* (Macedonius)*--her affliction prevented her from hastening herself--to remind him that she had not wanted to become the mother of children and to confront him with his promises. Seeing from a distance the coming of the messenger, he recognised him and knew the cause, for during the night the Master had revealed to him both the afflictions and the cure. So taking his stick, he arrived with this support; on entering the house, he gave, as usual, the greeting of peace. 'Have confidence,' he said, 'and do not fear; for the giver will not rescind the gift, unless you transgress the agreements made. You promised to give back what will be given you and to consecrate it to God's service.' 'That,' replied my mother, 'is how I both wish and pray to give birth, for I think failure in giving birth preferable to rearing the child otherwise...'*[17] The vow to dedicate a child to God was, in essence, a way of giving back to God what was received from Him. Entry into the monastic life, or into one of the ministries of the Church, were the best ways of fulfilling this vow to God. Man's response to

10 Ephrem, *Carmina Nisibena*, XIII, 2; tr. 180. Cf. also *Julian Saba*, I, 1; XXIV, 1.
11 *HR*, II, 7.
12 *HR*, II, 9.
13 *HR*, IV, 3; tr. 50.
14 *HR*, IX, 4.
15 *HR*, XII, 2; tr. 96.
16 *HR*, XXI, 14; tr. 138. To dedicate someone to God did not indicate an exclusive commitment to the monastic life; it could also be to the priesthood or some other ministry of the Church.
17 *HR*, XIII, 17; tr. 106.

God's call to the single life had to be made freely and on a personal basis.[18] It must be emphasised, however, that the monastic life is a call from God; nobody could follow such a life without that call.

B. THE LOVE OF GOD

The Single ones *(iḥidaye)* chose the life of Singleness *(iḥidayutha)* because they were attracted by God's love and His beauty. Their vocation was to love God and to live only for Him. Marcianus, for example, *transferred all this love o God and the things of God,*[19] and *Marianus, having tasted divine love, was ot willing to luxuriate in good things on his own, but made many others his ellow-lovers.*[20] Similarly, Eusebius defines his eremitic life as a complete act of love for God: *'Tell me, my friend,' he* (Ammianus) *said to him, 'whom do you think to please by having adopted this laborious and austere life?' He, of course, as was natural, replied: 'God, the teacher and lawgiver of virtue'.*[21] Agrippa *consumed by the firebrand of that love wet his cheeks with continual tears.*[22] Peter the Galatian searched far and wide for earthly evidence of the Lord. In so doing he wished to express his love for God in the terms laid down in the *Song of Songs*: *It is somehow natural for those who are lovingly inclined to someone not only to reap delight from seeing him but also to gaze in great joy at his home and clothing and footwear. It is with this love for the bridegroom that the bride mentioned in the Song of Songs exclaims, 'As an apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons; in his shadow I yearned and sat, and his fruit was sweet in my mouth.'*[23] *So this divine man* (Peter) *did nothing unreasonable when he fell in love with the same bridegroom and used the words of the bride, 'I am wounded with love.'*[24] *Out of a desire to behold as if a shadow of the bridegroom, he set out to see the places* (Palestine) *which had poured forth for all men the streams of salvation.*[25] Alexander the Sleepless joined the ascetic life because he loved the Lord with all his heart: *Alexander, of blessed memory, loved the Master with all his heart and all his strength, and manifested it in his actions. That he neglected nothing of the commandments is shown by the fruit he bore. For the Lord says, 'By their fruits you shall know them'*[26]*. Nor was he concerned for his own salvation only, but he yearned to*

18 Cf. *HR*, III, 2; V, 1; VI, 9; VIII, 7; IX, 3; X,1; XII, 2; XXI, 11; XXVI, 2. Cf. Chrysostom, *Rom.* 11, 29; *Phil.* 3, 14; Festugière, *Antioche*, 189.
19 *HR*, III, 2; tr. 37.
20 *HR*, IV, 3; tr. 50.
21 *HR*, IV, 4; tr. 50.
22 *HR*, IV, 8; tr. 53.
23 *Song*. 2, 3.
24 *Song*. 5, 8.
25 *HR*, IX, 2; tr. 82.
26 *Mt*. 7, 16.

bring the whole world also to Christ the Master. This he did to some extent. And as if he held in his hands the reward of those who were saved through him, for fifty years he laboured with resolute soul and unflinching heart for those who wished to be saved, and especially for his own salvation.[27]

Pilgrimages to the birth place of Christ and to the other holy places of Christianity were frequently undertaken. Every relic of the Saviour or His saints was much prized by those who tried to follow Him.[28] Macedonius explains his eremitic life as the constant and continuing desire and love for God: *A certain general who loved coursing went up the mountain to hunt. He was accompanied by dogs and soldiers and whatever is needed for a hunt. On seeing the man fro a distance and learning from his companions who it was, he immediately lea from his horse, went up and spoke to him, and asked him what he did, liv there. He replied, 'What have you come here to do?' When the general told hi it was to hunt, he said, 'I too am hunting my God. I yearn to catch him, I long to behold him, and I shall not give up this noble hunt.' After hearing this, the general departed, naturally struck with admiration.*[29] Marana and Cyra so occupied themselves with the ascetic education of their maidservants that they finally *inflamed them with divine love.*[30] Domnina shed tears ceaselessly: *For it is fervent love for God that begets these tears.*[31] Baradatus withstood his suffering through the intensity of his love of God: *He endures all this labor, even though with a body not robust but much afflicted by numerous ailments; but his bubbling zeal, inflamed by divine love, compels to labor one who cannot labor.*[32]

According to Theodoret of Cyrrhus *the citizens of heaven attended to frugality even after death; neither when alive could they endure to entertain haughty thoughts, nor after death did they grasp at honor from men. Instead, they transferred all their love to the Bridegroom, like modest women who are eager to be loved and praised by their spouses but despite adulation from others. Because of this the Bridegroom made them celebrated even against their will, and gave them an abundant share of renown among men; for whenever someone pursues the things of God and asks for the things of heaven, he adds to these things innumerable others, granting their requests many times over.*[33] The life of the Single one *(iḥidaya)* was entirely devoted to God: *Wishing to live for Him alone, I* (James of Cyrrhestica) *have paid no thought to my reputation with men;*

27 Stoop, *Alexander*, 4.
28 Cf. *HR*, VI, 7-13; XXIX, 7; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 319-326.
29 *HR*, XIII, 6; tr. 102.
30 *HR*, XXX, 2; tr. 183; cf. XXIX, 7.
31 *HR*, XXX, 2; tr. 187.
32 *HR*, XXVII, 3; tr. 178.
33 *HR*, XV, 6; tr. 116; cf. XXIX, 6.

for what benefit is it, if the latter think more of my asceticism but God thinks less?[34] The *characteristic of lovers,* says Theodoret, is *to overlook everyone else and cleave to the one they cherish and love, to dream of him by night and think of him by day.*[35] In his chapter *on the divine love,*[36] he affirms that love sustains the hard life of the hermits; the eremitic vocation consists in the hermit's love of God: *How great and how many are the athletes of virtue and with which crowns they are decked, is clearly demonstrated by the accounts we have written of them...*[37] *If no other men have been able to hold out against such labors, it is learly desire for God that has made them surpass the limits of nature. Kindled y the firebrand from on high, they bear gladly the attack of the freezing cold, nd it is by dew from there that they mitigate the burning heat of the sun's rays....*[38] *Virtue, or philosophy* (asceticism), *is an abiding good... The substance of it is love for God. It is impossible for one who does not become fervently enamored of God to succeed in philosophy.... The 'friend of God'* (an ascetic/a hermit) *despises everything else and looks at the Beloved alone. He puts serving him before all the rest together; he says, performs and thinks only those things that please and serve the One he loves, and abominates everything that he forbids....*[39] *Being taught, therefore, by divine Scripture that he is beautiful, has indescribable wealth, is the fount of wisdom, is able to do whatever he wishes, possesses immeasurable love for men, pours forth rivers of kindness, and in everything wishes solely to benefit men--and being taught by the God-bearing men about the myriad and uncountable varieties of his beneficence--, they have been wounded by the sweet darts of love, and, as limbs of the bride, exclaim with her, 'We are wounded with love'....*[40]

Aphrahat believed that the two poles in the lives of the *Covenanters* should be the love of God and the love of one's neighbour; to attain perfection in the sight of God they should follow this life of love.[41] The *Liber Graduum* advises the *ihidaye* to live according to the love of the Lord, which is their only means of attaining perfection. Love is the perfect realisation of the life of *ihidayutha.*[42] In the opinion of St. Ephrem, the purpose of every aspect of the ascetic life is to attain God's love.[43] For him, the love of God and the love of one's neighbour are the two wings of the *ihidaya*, with which he can fly to God. Without love the

34 *HR,* XXI, 11; tr. 157.
35 *HR,* XXI, 34; tr. 146.
36 Cf. *HR,* XXXI; tr. 190-205.
37 *HR,* XXXI, 1; tr. 190.
38 *HR,* XXXI, 4; tr. 192.
39 *HR,* XXXI, 15; tr. 199-200.
40 *HR,* XXXI, 20; tr. 204. The biblical quotation is from *Song.* 5, 8.
41 Cf. Aphrahat, *Dem.* II; 47-96; *Dem.* XIV, 604-605.
42 Cf. *Liber Graduum,* XXX, 860-932.
43 Ephrem, *Commentaire de l'évangile concordant;* XVI, 23.

life of the ascetic is impossible.[44] To summarize, the *ihidaye loved God from (their) youth,* and *by reason of their love for God, like beasts they are gone out into the wilds.* !45 This emphasis on the spiritual nature of love in the lives of the Syrian solitaries is rooted in the spirituality of their Church. They were taught that their vocation to the single life was identical with the basic Christian vocation of following the Lord. The Christian call of God to men is one of love and the Christian calling is to a life of love. The *Odes of Solomon* celebrate the love which exists between the lover and his Beloved:

I love the Beloved One, and my soul loves him;
And where his rest is, there too am I....
I was united to him, because the lover has found the Beloved one,
Because I love that Son, I shall become a son.... !46
I thank thee, O Lord,
Because I love thee.... !47
As the work of the ploughman is the ploughshare,
And the work of the helmsman is the steering of the ship,
So, too, my work is the psalm of the Lord in his praises.
My craft and my occupation are in his praises,
Because his love nourished my heart,
And it brought up his fruits to my lips.
For my love is the Lord,
Therefore I will sing to him;
For I am made strong by his praises,
And I have faith in him. !48
Love belongs to the elect,
And who will put it on but those who have possessed it from the beginning? !49
As the arm of the bridegroom upon the bride,
So is my yoke upon those who know me;
And as the bed that is spread in the bridal chamber,

44 Cf. Ephrem, *Commentaire,* XIX, 13; cf. also *Julian Saba,* VII, 1, X, 2.
45 *Syriac Life,* 190; cf. Ephrem, *On the Solitaries,* Syr. II, 57; tr. 472 (50).
46 *Odes of Solomon,* III, 5.7.; tr. 691-92.
47 *Odes of Solomon,* V, 1; tr. 693.
48 *Odes of Solomon,* XVI, 1-4; tr.705; cf. *ibid.* VII, 19; VIII, 22; XVIII, 1; XL, 4; XLI, 16; XVII, 12.
49 *Odes of Solomon,* XXIII, 3; tr. 713.

So is my love upon those who believe in me.[50] The *Didascalia*, the *Acts of Thomas*, *Didache*, Theophilus of Antioch, and Ignatius of Antioch all urge Christians to be *full of love.*[51]

C. IMITATION OF CHRIST AND HIS BELOVED ONES

1. IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST

In the Syrian Church the imitation of Jesus Christ was the most important inspiration for the eremitic life. A hermit gave up everything to take up the eremitic life because of Christ. The hermit loved God through the love of Jesus for his Father. In Christ the hermit found the perfect fulfilment of his vocation. Theodoret, for example, in his prologue to the *Historia Religiosa*, relates that the hermits bore all sufferings because of Christ: *It is not their nature that afforded them victory--for it is mortal and full of innumerable passions--but their resolve, attracting divine grace. As fervent lovers of the beauty of God, choosing to do and suffer all things gladly on behalf of the Beloved, they bore nobly the revolt of the passions and were steadfast in shaking off the showers of the devil's darts....*[52] James of Nisibis attempted to imitate Jesus in every way.[53] Similarly, Marcianus always tried to follow the example of the Lord: *Therefore examine with me if he did not imitate his Master as well-disposed servant; for the Master once when the sea was raging against his disciples' boat and he saw them panic-stricken, did not curb the surge of the sea before he had put an end to the disciples' lack of faith with a rebuke.*[54] *Taught by that, this wonderful man* (Marcianus) *first dispelled his companion's cowardice and thereafter delivered the beast to punishment.*[55] Aphrahat imitated *the Master's love for men*[56] and, like Christ, he spoke in parables.[57] When Abraham was persecuted by pagans in Lebanon, he did not condemn his persecutors but imitated *the Master who when nailed to the cross showed concern for those who had done it....*[58] Symeon the Stylite issued holy commands in the manner of Christ: *He gave this order in imitation of the Master, who told the paralytic to carry his bed.*[59] *But let no one call the imitation usurpation, for His is the utterance, 'He who believes in me*

50 *Odes of Solomon*, XLII, 8-9; tr. 730-731; cf. *ibid.* III, 2-4; VIII, 13; XI, 2; XII, 12; XVI, 2-3.

51 *Didascalia*, IV, 54; tr. 46; cf. Ignatius, *Eph.* 1, 1-3; 2, 1; *Mag.* 1; 5, 2; 6, 2; 7, 1; 14; *Tral.* 3. 13; *Rom.* 7; 9. *Didache*, 1, 2-3. Theophilus of Antioch, III, 14. *Didascalia*, IX, 114. *Acts of Thomas*, 6, 7; 128; 160, 167. Cf. Hendricks, 'L'Amour du Christ', 297-302.

52 *HR*, *Prol.* 5; tr. 5.

53 *HR*, I, 6.8.

54 *Mt.* 8, 24-26.

55 *HR*, III, 8.

56 *HR*, VIII, 14; tr. 78; cf. *ibid.* I, 8.

57 *HR*, VIII, 8.

58 *HR*, XVIII, 3; tr. 121.

59 Cf. *Mt.* 9, 6.

will himself do the works that I do, and greater than these will he do.'[60] *Of this promise we have seen the fulfilment; for while the Lord's shadow nowhere performed a miracle, the shadow of the great Peter cancelled death, drove out diseases, and put demons to flight.*[61] *But it is the Master who throught his servants performed these miracles too; and now likewise it is by the use of His Name that the godly Symeon performs his innumerable miracles.*[62]

2. IMITATION OF THE PROPHETS AND THE APOSTLES

The prophets of the Old Testament were important subjects of contemplat and imitation. The eremitic life in the Syrian Church traced its origins back the Prophets. The love of God which motivated the Prophets to worship Hi. subsequently motivated the hermits to lead a life comparable with that of the Prophets. The most important figures, in this respect, were Elijah and John the Baptist.[63]

a. Adam and Eve

In one sense the hermit's life can be compared with the life led by Adam and Eve before the Fall; like Adam and Eve the hermit meditated on God with all the purity of his heart. St. John Chrysostom affirms that the monks' life is like the life of Adam before his sin: *Here already they meditate upon the things of the kingdom, holding converse with groves, and mountains, and springs, and with great quietness, and solitude, and before all these, with God. And from all turmoil is their cell pure, and from every passion and disease is their soul free, refined and light, and far purer than the finest air. And their work is what was Adam's also at the beginning and before his sin, when he was clothed with the glory, and conversed freely with God, and dwelt in that place that was full of great blessedness. For in what respect are they in a worse state than he, when before his disobedience he was set to till the garden? Had he no worldly care? But neither have these. Did he talk to God with a pure conscience? this also do these; or rather they have a greater confidence than he, inasmuch as they enjoy even greater grace by the supply of the Spirit.*[64] The life of Adam and Eve before and after the fall was a subject of meditation for the *ihidaye*. They joined the eremitic life to escape from sin and so to attempt to recapture the prelapsarian purity of Adam and Eve.[65] In Theodoret's view, moreover, Adam's life with God, like that of the hermits, was centered on love.[66] Theophilus of Antioch was the first among the early Syrian Fathers to discuss the life of Adam

60 *Jn.* 14, 12.
61 Cf. *Acts*, 5, 15.
62 *HR*, XXVI, 17; tr. 168; cf. *ibid.* XXIX, 7; *Antony Life*, 497 (13).
63 Cf. *HR*, XXXI, 16-21.
64 Chrysostom, *Matt.* 68,3; tr. 417-418.
65 Cf. *Liber Graduum*, XV, 336-386; 584-632; cf. Aphrahat in this work pp .
66 *HR*, XXXI, 16.

and Eve, and to treat their prelapsarian state as a true experience of love and unity in God.[67]

b. Noah

Noah and his children also provided models for the early Syrian ascetics.[68] In a *Memra* attributed to Ephrem the world is divided into two camps, the sinners and the just; the latter are the sons of Noah:

Upon the scales of truth
justice set the two assemblies:
The covetous lay fettered to the earth,
but the poor by choice took wing to Heaven's heights.
That race which lived in Noah's days
was dissolute and a friend of Mammon;
with wrath the flood destroyed it,
because it had angered God.[69]
Yet Enoch, since he pleased the Lord,
was caught away to Paradise.[70]
Ahab, who loved possessions,
was devoured by dogs, as it is written.[71]
Elias, who wandered through the deserts,
on a chariot ascended into Heaven.[72]
Herod, who was a lover of riches,
saw his riches annulled in death.
But John, who dwelt in the wilderness,
is great in the Kingdom of the heavens.[73]
They are for us an excellent exemplar
whereby we might follow them,
So that on the wings of willing poverty
we might fly up to reach them.[74]

67 Theophilus of Antioch, II, 17-28.
68 Cf. Aphrahat in this work, pp. 74-86.
69 *Gen.* 6, 5ff.
70 *Gen.* 5, 24.
71 *3Kings*, 22, 38.
72 *4Kings*, 2, 11.
73 *Mt.* 11,11.
74 Ephrem, *on Solitaries*, Syr. II, 25-52; tr. 471-472. Cf. also Ephrem, *Carmina Nisibena*, I. 4.10; LVII, 1; *Liber Graduum*, 620-621; John the Solitary, *(Lavenant)*, 142-143.

Theodoret considers Noah's love for God as the means by which his race was preserved: *What should one say of the friendship with God of Noah, which even the huge crop of the lawless could not disprove? But when all turned aside and chose the opposite course, he alone traveled on the straight path, putting the Creator before all things together; on account of this, he alone with his children attained being saved, a seed was left to nature, and a spark was preserved for the race.*[75] Theodoret speaks of Noah's love as a model for the hermit's love an friendship with God.[76]

c. Abraham

In Theodoret's opinion Abraham was a true *friend of God*, i.e., an asce who gave up everything for the Lord. His life should therefore remain an example for every aspiring *friend of God: My account, however, proceeding on its way, has reached the one who was actually styled the 'friend of God',*[77] *and who observed and taught exactly the rules of friendship.*[78] *Who of those with any education in the things of God does not know how Abraham the great patriarch obeyed the call of God, how he left his Fathers house and preferred the foreign land to his fatherland?*[79] *When once he became enamored of the one who had called him, he decided to put everything else second to this friendship. Despite falling many times into many hardships, he did not desert his beloved on the ground of his not accomplishing his promises; but though oppressed by thirst and prevented from drinking water from wells he had dug, he neither was angry with the one who had called him, nor avenged himself on those who were wronging him.*[80] *He underwent the attack of hunger also,*[81] *yet did not quench the fireband of love. He was deprived of his wife, who was resplendent with beauty, decked with self-control, and made his life agreeable in every way.*[82] *Yet he did not lose together with his wife his love for God; but with the aid of God, who was testing his patience in allowing him to undergo the attacks of injustice, he persevered in the same love....*[83] Abraham's hospitality provided an example for his namesake, Abraham the apostle of Lebanon: *While wearing down his body with such labors, he* (Abraham) *was inexhaustible in the services he rendered others. For strangers who came a bed was ready, glistening and select*

75 *HR*, XXXI, 16; tr. 200.
76 Cf. *HR*, XXXI, 14ff.
77 In Theoderet's language 'friend of God' means the ascetic and 'friendship with God' asceticism; cf. *HR*, XXXI, 15.
78 Cf. *Is.* 41, 8.
79 Cf. *Gen.* 12, 1-4.
80 Cf. *Gen.* 21, 25-30.
81 Cf. *Gen.* 12, 10.
82 Cf. *Gen.*, 20, 2.
83 *HR*, XXXI, 17; tr. 201; cf. *HR*, I, 1; *Liber Graduum*, 925-928.

rolls were offered, wine of a fine bouquet, fish and vegetables and all the other things that go with them; he himself at midday sat with the diners, offering to each portions of the fare provided, giving goblets to all and bidding them drink, in imitation of his great namesake--I mean the Patriarch--who served his guests but did not dine with them.[84] Abraham Qidunaya's asceticism was inspired by Abraham of the Old Testament.[85]

d. Jacob

Alexader the Sleepless (Akoimetos) was depicted by his biographer as nilar to Jacob: *After travelling for two days, the spiritual Jacob reached the iver Euphrates and crossed it. And finding a wine jar stuck in the ground, he performed his prayers in the mountains during the day, and spent the nights in the wine jar. [Jacob] crossed over with his staff, praying for bread to eat and clothing to wear,*[86] *and spent twenty years there. With him in mind, the blessed Alexander prayed God to grant him to be accounted a second Jacob. And God, who loves mankind, granted him what he had asked of Him. Comparing the parallels, he said to himself: 'He was a shepherd of dumb sheep; I strive to become a shepherd of reason-endowed sheep. He after seven years justly asked to receive his payment from Laban; after seven years, I shall win grace from my Master. He served man for twenty years and gained four wives and became the father of the synagogues; in my twenty years of serving my Master, I have brought to Him four choirs of foreigners. He feared his brother, and redeemed his life with eight droves;*[87] *and I look for my salvation with eight choirs praising God. He had twelve sons according to the flesh; I have twelve readings from the divine Scriptures'.*[88]

e. Moses

Moses' name and example is very often cited in Theodoret's *Historia Religiosa*. Indeed, in their desire to outshine even Moses, the hermits of the *Historia* seem almost like a stadium full of athletes struggling to surpass the hero of the Old Testament. Theodoret, who is deeply impressed by the wonderful life of Moses, frequently seeks to show that his hermits were not only similar to Moses, but even greater than him: *Moses, the divine legislator, who laid bare the bottom of the sea, flooded with water the moistureless desert and worked all the other miracles, wrote down the way of life of the holy men of old, not using the wisdom he had adopted from the Egyptians but receiving the splendor of grace from on high. For from what other source could he have learnt of the virtue of*

84 *HR*, XVII, 7; tr. 122-123; cf. *Gen.* 18, 8; *Liber Graduum*, 221-224.
85 Cf. *Abraham Qidunaya*, X,1; XI, 1; XIII, 1; XIV, 14; XX, 12 ff.
86 *Gen.* 28, 20.
87 *Gen.* 32, 11-21.
88 Stoop, *Alexander*, 26.

Abel, the devotion of Enoch, the righteousness of Noah, the priestly piety of Melchizedek, the call, faith and endurance of Abraham, his attentive hospitality, the celebrated sacrifice of his son and the list of his other achievements, and, to speak in summary, the contests, victories and utterances of those glorious men, if he had not received the rays of the rational and divine Spirit? I too need this assistance at present, as I try to write down the life of the glorious saints of our own time and the recent past, and seek to set out a rule, as it were, for those who wish to emulate them.[89] Theodoret considers James of Nisibis a *new Mo* because of the wonderful miracle he performed.[90] Julian Saba is also compare to Moses because, like him, he watered the desert with his prayers: *The spring has lasted even till now, witnessing to the prayer (like that of Moses) of the inspired Old Man: just as Moses once of old by striking with his rod that infertile rock caused a flood of fertile river water, in order to satisfy the thirst of those many thousands,*[91] *so this man of God by watering with his tears that most arid sand drew forth streams of spring-water, to cure the thirst not of many myriads but of a single adolescent.*[92] Like *the great Moses* Marianus was also *a faithful servant of God.*[93] Alexander the Sleepless (Akoimetos) was depicted by his biographer as a second Moses: *I shall relate a few of the many miracles which were made manifest to many people; for by this I want to show that this noble athlete really became a second Moses, faithful to God in all his house.*[94]

Mount Sinai, where Moses spoke to God, was a very important site for the hermits. Symeon the Elder longed to visit to the holy place of Moses: *Longing for quiet yet again, however, he conceived the desire to repair to Mount Sinai. On learning this, many excellent men who pursued the same philosophy assembled together in their desire to share the journey with him... the old man... said: ...in our pursuit of the ascetic life and longing for quiet are wandering in the desert, wishing to adore the God of all things on Mount Sinai, on which he made his own epiphany to give the tablets of the Law to his servant Moses--not that we think that the Godhead has been circumscribed in place (for we hear*

89 *HR*, I, 1; tr. 12.

90 Cf. *HR*, I, 5.

91 Cf. *Ex.* 17, 6.

92 *HR*, II, 8; tr. 27-28. The story of this miracle is as follows: 'A youth called Asterius came to Julian Saba to ask if he might become his companion in the desert. At first Julian refused the demand but, when Asterius insisted, he eventually agreed. After three days in the desert, the youth was in danger of dying of thirst. Julian was obliged to ask God for a miracle: 'Kneeling down he besought the Master, wet the ground with fervent tears, and sought a way to save the young man. He who does the will of those who fear him and listens to their entreaty made the streams of tears, as they touched the dust, into a spring of waters; and when the young man was thereby replenished with fresh water, he immediately ordered him to depart.' *HR*, II, 7; tr. 27.

93 *HR*, IV, 3; tr. 50.

94 Stoop, *Alexander*, 46.

him saying, 'I fill heaven and earth, says the Lord,'[95] *and 'he contains the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants in it as grasshoppers'*[96]*--but since to those who love fervently not only are their beloved thrice desired, but lovable too are the places that have been graced by their presence and frequenting....*'[97] *It is related that, when they reached the mountain they desired, this wonderful old man, on the very spot where Moses was counted worthy to see God and beheld him as far 's possible for human nature, knelt down and did not get up until he heard a ivine voice announcing to him the Master's favor. He had spent the whole cycle f a week bent double in this way and taking not a scrap of food when the voice sounded and bade him take what was offered him and eat it willingly. Stretching out his hand he found three apples; and on taking his fill of them, as their giver had enjoined, he recovered all his strength and, naturally enough, greeted his companions with gladness of heart. So he returned home rejoicing and exulting at having heard a divine voice and enjoyed food that was likewise a gift from God.*[98] Julian Saba also went to Sinai, where, *on the rock under which Moses the leader of the prophets hid when he was counted worthy to see God, in so far as it is possible to see him, Julian built a Church and consecrated an altar of God....*[99]

Theodosius was also like Moses. When *he struck the rock* a powerful spring of water erupted.[100] Romanus was distinguished by many good qualities but especially his meekness which was compared with that of Moses, *and this was the distinguishing feature of the achievements of Moses the lawgiver: 'Moses,' he says, 'was very meek, more than all men that were on earth.'*[101] Marana and Cyra emulated Moses in their fasting: *Emulating the fast of the inspired Moses, they have three times spent the same length of time without food....*[102] Just as God guided Moses throughout his life, He also led Symeon the Stylite: *This is Moses the great prophet,* God's voice speaks, *who received the law from God on Mount Sinai, and by whose hands miracles and signs were done. He became great in the sight of God and honored of all men, and another prophet like him*

95 *Jer.* 23, 24.

96 *Is.* 40, 22.

97 *HR*, VI, 7-8; tr. 65-66.

98 *HR*, VI, 12; tr. 67. Price, *History of the Monks*, 68, says: 'A pilgrim to Sinai exactly contemporary to Symeon was Egeria, whose detailed account survives (J. Wilkinson, (ed.), *Egeria's Travels*, 91ff.). Sinai was already a standard place of pilgrimage, with a great number of spots precisely identified as the locations of stories in Exodus, and with local monks acting as guides'.

99 *HR*, II, 13; tr. 29.

100 This event is related in *HR*, 7. Canivet, *Histoire* I, 449 believes that the story belongs to John Moschos, not Theodoret. Cf. Price, *History*, 93, however, who only partly agrees with Canivet.

101 *HR*, XI, 2; tr. 94-95.

102 *HR*, XXIX, 7; tr. 184.

did not arise in Israel after him. Thus also thou (Symeon) *if thou doest well and right, shalt be greater than all thy contemporaries. And as I was with Moses, so also will I be with thee.*'[103] Symeon imitated Moses in many ways during the course of his life. He fasted and tried to deal with people as Moses did.[104] Like Moses and certain other prophets Symeon was raised as a shepherd: *Originating from this village, he was taught by his parents first to shepherd animals, so tha in this respect too he might be comparable to those great men the patriar Jacob, the chaste Joseph, the lawgiver Moses, the king and prophet David, t prophet Micah and the inspired men of their kind.*[105] Similarly, as a captiv Malchus was made to become a shepherd. In this state he compared himself t Moses and Jacob: *some sheep were given to me, to tend, and, comparatively speaking, I found this occupation a comfort, for I seldom saw my master or fellow slaves. My fate seemed to be like that of Jacob in sacred history and reminded me also of Moses; both of whom were once shepherds in the desert.*[106]

Theodoret depicted Moses as an ascetic who lived only for God: *Such was Moses the great lawgiver, who often, in so far as man can attain to it, was counted worthy of divine contemplation and often heard the blessed voice, who was in the darkness for forty days together and received the divine legislation.... Just as fire, the more it is fed, displays greater activity--for it is increased, not dulled, by the addition of fuel--, so too love of God is kindled by contemplating the things of God, the more does he kindle the fire of love. This has been taught not only by the great Moses but also by the holy spouce of whom the inspired Paul says, 'I have yoked you to one husband to present a pure virgin to God.'*[107] Abraham Qidunaya was compared with Moses on account of his divine power.[108] He also tried to attain a Mosaic purity.[109] Also comparable is the ascetic life of Julian of Saba, who, like Moses, had to fight in the desert.[110] Aphrahat's *Covenanters* wished to be continent for the Lord's sake; in this context Aphrahat held up Moses as an example of *holiness.*[111] In short, one could hardly overstress the importance of Moses in Syrian asceticism. For the Syrian hermits he provided an example to be imitated and an object of spiritual love.[112]

103 *Syriac Life*, 152.
104 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 181, 188; *HR* XXVI, 7.
105 *HR*, XXVI, 2; tr. 160-161. Cf. Price, *History*, 173: 'Symeon's having been a shepherd is doubtless a typological accretion: his social status is better indicated by the 'very wealthy' aunt mentioned in the *Syriac Life* II'.
106 Jerome, *Malchus*, 316 (5).
107 *HR*, XXXI, 5; tr. 193; cf. *2Cor.*, 11, 2.
108 Cf. *Abraham Qidunaya*, II, (19); III (9); V (23).
109 Cf. *Abraham Qidunaya*, XI (7).
110 Cf. *Julian Saba*, II (8); III (1); XIX (11); XX (1).
111 Cf. Aphrahat in this work, pp. 86-90.

f. Elijah and Elisha

According to St. Ephrem, Elijah and Elisha are archetypes of hermits who dwell in the desert.[113] Their life of chastity and celibacy was an example for the ascetic to imitate: *Thy chastity be as Elisha's, and thy celibacy Elijah's.*[114] Abraham Qidunaya was also compared with Elijah and Elisha,[115] as was the glory of Julian Saba.[116] The *Covenanters* of Aphrahat imitated Elijah in their virginity: *Whosoever loves virginity, let him become like Elijah.*[117] The *Liber Graduum* advises the *ihidaya* to seek perfection like Elijah and Elisha.[118]

Chrysostom regards the monastic dress as being like that of Elijah, Elisha and the apostles: *And their dress is suitable to their manliness. For not indeed, like those with trailing garments, the enervated and mincing, are they dressed, but like those blessed angels, Elijah, Elisha, John, like the apostles.*[119] Chrysostom also adds that the troops of monks were like Elijah with his seven thousand men, struggling against the unbelievers: *And if thou knowest not of them, it is nothing marvellous, since Elias too supposed he was alone, but was told, 'I have left unto myself seven thousand men.'*[120] *Whence it is manifest that even now there are many who show forth the apostolical life; like as the 'three thousand' then, and the 'five thousand.'*[121] *And if we believe not, it is not because there are none who do well, but because we are far from so doing. So that just as the drunkard would not easily believe that there exists any man who doth not taste even water (and yet this has been achieved by many solitaries in our time); nor he who connects himself with numberless women, that it is easy to live in virginity; nor he that extorts other men's goods, that one shall readily give up even his own: so neither will those, who daily melt themselves down with innumerable anxieties, easily receive this thing.*[122] Alexander Akoimetos was similar to Elijah for he, like Elijah, performed miracles: *Laughing, Rabbula said to the blessed Alexander: 'If this is true and that is what your God is like, and He hears His*

112 Cf. Strothman, *Johannes von Ap.* IV, 171ff., 241ff., 339ff., 492ff.; V, 193ff., 215ff.; VI. 191ff.; X, 145ff. For Moses' general importance in the theology of the Syrian Church see Tonneau, 'Moïse dans la tradition syrienne'.

113 Cf. Overbeck, *Opera selecta*, 113; Zingerle, *Monumenta syriaca* I, 4; Ephrem, *Hymni et sermones*, IV.

114 Ephrem, *Carmina Nisibena*, XXI, 4; tr. 191; cf. *De Paradiso*, XIV, 17-19; *Ephiphany*, VIII. 18; Aphrahat, VI, 253 (9-10); *Abraham Qidunaya*, II, 2.

115 Cf. *Abraham Qidunaya*, I, 10; II, 2; III, 11.

116 Cf. *Julianos Saba*, XII, 7; XVIII, 6ff.; XXI, 22; XXIII, 17.

117 Aphrahat, VI, 253, 9-10; tr. 365.

118 Cf. *Liber Graduum*, IX, 224, 22; 225, 17.

119 Chrysostom, *Matt.* LXVIII, 3; tr. 418.

120 *I Kings*, 19, 18; *Rom.* 11, 4.

121 *Acts*, 2, 4; 4, 5.

122 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* XXI, 5; tr. 149.

servants so quickly, you too should pray for fire to come down in front of us; and if it does come down, I shall say that there is no god other than the God of the Christians. For in fact the things you have in your scriptures are false, and, as you say, you are a servant of that God'. Without hesitation, the blessed Alexander trusted that the Lord God would grant the petition. And because it is written, 'to him that believes, all things are possible', he said to him, 'You call on your gods, for they are many, that fire may come down before us. Then I will call on my God and fire will come down and consume the rushes lying befor us'. But Rabbula said, 'I do not have such authority'. Hearing this the sai ardent in spirit, arose saying, 'Let us pray'. He stood facing east with his ha stretched out, and prayed so that creation itself was moved. And fire came dc and consumed that rush mats lying around the house, as the noble athlete h. said. It did them no harm. But Rabbula, seeing the immensity of the miracle ana thinking that the fire would consume him too, fell at the blessed man's feet and clasped them until the fire had died down, and cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Great is the God of the Christians!' He wanted to proclaim the miracle to everyone, but the saint swore him not to confess the mystery to anyone during his lifetime, and he kept his word.[123]

For Theodoret, Marcianus deserves to be ranked among the famous prophets: *How could we adequately express admiration of the famous Marcianus? Clearly by classing him with Elijah and John and those like them, who 'went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and the holes of the earth'.*[124] The hermits, according to Theodoret, were pursuing the life of Elijah.[125] Like Elijah in the desert, they were ministered to by the providence of God.[126] Abraham became even greater than Moses and Elijah because he relinquished cooked food and ate only green vegetables: *That 'man will not live on bread alone' had been said by Moses the lawgiver,*[127] *and the Master recalled this utterance when he rejected the invitation of the devil;*[128] *but that living without water is among the things possible, we have nowhere been taught in the divine Scripture--even the great Elijah first satisfied this need from the brook, and then on going to the widow of Zarephath first told her to bring him water and then likewise asked for bread....*[129] Maësymas' love for the poor was compared with that of Elijah for the widow of Sarepta: *So zealously did he*

123 Stoop, *Alexander*, 13.
124 *HR*, III, 1; tr. 37; cf. *Heb.* 11, 37-38.
125 Cf. *HR*, IV, 4.
126 Cf. *HR*, VI, 11.
127 *Deut.* 8, 3.
128 Cf. *Mt.* 4, 4.
129 *HR*, XVII, 6; tr. 122; *1Kings*, 17, 6-11.

attend to the care of strangers and the poor that he threw open his doors to all who came. He is said to have had two jars, one of grain and the other of oil, out of which he always supplied those in need, and which he always had full, since the blessing given to the widow of Zarephath[130] *had been attached to these jars as well: 'the same Lord is of all, rich for all who call upon him....'*[131] The fasting of Simeon the Stylite was likened to that of Moses and Elijah, while his ministry of love, through which he guided the people, was modelled on the example of Elijah and the other prophets.[132] Theodoret considers Macedonius to be *a new Elisha.*[133] Likewise, Alexander Akoimetos was thought to have the power of Elijah for, like the prophet, he made fire come down from heaven.[134] Elijah, therefore, is one of the most important models for the Christian monk. He seems to have been considered by the early monks as the founder of the biblical solitary life. Elisha, Elijah's disciple, was thought to be almost as important as his master.[135]

g. John the Baptist

In the Syrian ascetic tradition John the Baptist enjoyed a reputation equal to and possibly greater than that of Elijah. On occasion he was even considered to be Elijah, returned to dwell as an *iḥidaya* in the desert. Aphrahat, who regards John the Baptist as an example of virginity for the *Covenanters,*[136] describes the powerful similarities between Elijah and John: *Our Lord testifies concerning John, that he is the greatest of the Prophets. Yet he received the Spirit by limit, because in that measure in which Elijah received the Spirit, (in the same) John obtained it. And as Elijah used to dwell in the wilderness, so also the Spirit of God led John into the mountains and caves. The birds sustained Elijah, and John used to eat locusts that fly. Elijah had his loins girded with a cincture of leather. Jezebel persecuted Elijah, and Herodias persecuted John. Elijah reproved Ahab, and John reproved Herod. Elijah divided the Jordan, and John opened up baptism. The spirit of Elijah rested twofold upon Elisha, so John laid his hand on our Redeemer, and He received the Spirit not by measure. Elijah opened the heavens and ascended; and John saw the heavens opened and the Spirit of God which descended and rested upon our Redeemer. Elijah received twofold the Spirit of Elijah; and our Redeemer received that of John and that of*

130 *1Kings,* 17, 9-16.

131 *HR,* XIV, 2; tr. 111; cf. *Rom.* 10, 12.

132 Cf. *HR,* XXVI, 7; *Syriac Life,* 152-153, 181.

133 *HR,* III, 17.

134 Stoop, *Alexandre,* 666 (12).

135 Hannay, *Spirit and Origin,* 259, says: 'The schools of the prophets founded by Samuel must have had some ascetic tinge in their religion. They may have been the ancestors of the great ascetic prophet Elijah, to whom the Christian monks looked back as their prototype. The Rechabites, who are praised by Jeremiah, were an ascetic sect; cf. *Jer.* 35, 1)'

136 Cf. Aphrahat, VI, 264, 23-25.

Heaven.[137] Aphrahat pursues the analogy so far as to make Elisha similar to Jesus Christ: Elijah is to Elisha as John is to Jesus.[138] Aphrahat concludes by arguing that, in their ascetic Christian way of life, the *Covenanters* are comparable with Elijah and Elisha as well as with John and Jesus.[139] For Ephrem, John the Baptist provides an example for the ascetics because he renounced the world and sought to please God.[140] John's purpose in going to the desert was not to become a wild man. Rather, he wished to transform the wild character of this earthly world into a sweetness characteristic of the Lord.[141] In the *memre* attributed to Ephrem, the hermits are regarded as companions Elijah and imitators of John the Baptist.[142] The life of the *ihidaye*, therefore like that of Elijah, Elisha, and John. Julian Saba's life in the desert was model on that of John the Baptist.[143] Theodoret compares Marcianus to John becaus he led a life similar to his. Eusebius was called to a ministry resembling John's; he gave guidance to his brothers and tried to prepare them for Christ.[144] It should be noted, however, that the renown in which both John the Baptist and Elijah were held was not confined to the Syrian Church. It was found in the whole Eastern Church, especially among monks, nuns, and ascetics. These holy men were regarded as the first biblical archetypes of the monastic life.[145]

h. The Apostles

The New Testament was much used by the ascetics of the Syrian Church and accordingly its apostles served as models. For the present purpose I will mention only those verses which were used to illustrate the similarities between the hermits and the Apostles. In order to explain the power of James of Nisibis, Theodoret uses the example of Peter: *This seems to me to resemble the miracle worked by the great Peter, who consigned to death Ananias and Sapphira who had concealed and deceived,*[146] *for James likewise deprived of life one who had concealed the truth and practised deceit.... James, who was full of the grace of*

137 Aphrahat, VI, 288 (26)-289 (20); tr. 371.

138 Cf. Aphrahat, VI, 289-292.

139 Cf. Aphrahat, VI, 288-293.

140 Cf. Ephrem, *Commentaire,* IX,7: 'Si tu y regardes bien, son honneur n'est pas inférieur à celui des anges, car il (John) méprisait le monde entier et cherchait à servir les réalités célestes'; tr. 174.

141 Cf. Ephrem, *Commentaire,* III, 9: 'Jean s'en alla au désert, non pour y devenir sauvage, mais pour adoucir dans le désert la sauvagerie de la terre habitée'; tr. 87.

142 Overbeck, *Opera Selecta,* 113, 4-5.

143 *Julian Saba,* 79, 21.

144 Cf. *HR,* IV, 4. James of Cyrrhestica was encouraged and protected by John the Baptist in his fight against Marcion, cf, *HR,* XXI, 19-21.

145 Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Virginity,* VI,1, M. Aubineau, (ed.), especially notes 4-5, p. 339. Brock, 'Asceticism', 5: 'John's life was, needless to say, regarded by the early Church as the ideal which the ascetic should imitate'.

146 Cf. *Acts,* 5, 1-10.

an Apostle, both applied chastisement as the occasion demanded and then swiftly revoked it....[147] The relationship of Julian Saba and Asterius was regarded as analogous to that of Jesus Christ with Peter and John. This comparison was made primarily on account of Asterius' obedience to Julian: *In this he was imitating the first of the Apostles, who, when the Lord wished to wash his feet, at first refused, insisting firmly that this should never happen. But when he heard that he would be cut off from fellowship with the Master if he did not consent to this, he begged for his hands as well as his feet to be washed and also his head.*[148] *So too the great John, when he was orderd to baptize the Savior, at first acknowledged his own servitude and indicated the Master, but later he performed what was ordered, not acting in presumption but obeying the Master.*[149] *So too this divine man* (Julian Saba) *was distressed that while another labored he himself should enjoy the fruit, but when he saw the fervent eagerness of his servant, he chose the man's service in preference to his own choice.*[150] Theodoret adds a further example in which Julian Saba is compared with the Apostles: *After freeing many from all kinds of disease, he proceeded from there to the assembly of the pious. As he passed through the gates of the palace, a beggar who used his buttocks in place of his feet and crawled on the ground, on stretching out his hand and touching the goat's hair cloak, drove out his affliction by faith, and leaping up displayed how he had run before his sickness, doing the same as the lame man whom Peter and John raised up.*[151] *At this occurence, all the people of the town assembled, and the military drill-ground became filled with those flocking together, shamefaced were the calumniators and the concocters of the lie, totally cheered and delighted the nurslings of piety.*[152]

147 *HR* I, 9; tr. 16. The story of this miracle is related in *HR*, I, 8. For its meaning and use in Antiquity see Canivet: 'Ces prodiges présentent quelques caractères communs. Chez Jacques de Nisibe, ils s'accompagnent tous de malédictions et d'imprécations et sont destinés à dénoncer une justice ou à punir un méfait'; he adds: 'on lit un récit analogue dans la Vie syriaque d'Ephrem (P. Peeters, 'La légende de S. Jacques,' 292-293.); I, 6 (figuier desséché pour dénoncer des abus de justice): Cf. *Mt.* 21, 19s.; I, 8 (punition d'un faux mort): rappel d'*Acts*, 5, 1-11, cet épisode répète un prodige déjà attribué à Grégoire le Thaumaturge par Grégoire de Nysse (*PG* 46, 491-497) et à Epiphane par Sozomène (*HE* VII, 27, GCS 50. p. 343, 12-26), mais Sozomène connaît le récit de Grégoire (p. 343-6s.) et le rapprochement lui inspire quelque méfiance; Cf. P. Peeters, 'La légende de S. Jacques,' p. 293-294; I, 11-13 (siège de Nisibe; Jacques nouvel Ezéchias): rappelle *2Sam.* I, 9-12 et. 19', *Monachisme syrien*, 120.

148 Cf. *Jn.* 13, 8-9.

149 Cf. *Mt.* 3, 13-16.

150 *HR*, II, 11; tr. 28-29. The story of the encounter between Julian and Asterius is retold in *HR*. II, 10.

151 Cf. *Acts*, 3,1-8.

152 *HR*, II, 19; tr. 33.

The example of Peter acting as Christ's shepherd, watching over His flock, convinced Eusebius to renounce his life of silence in order to guide the eremitic community: *And the Lord in the holy Gospels tells Peter, who had professed to love him more than the others, to tend his sheep;*[153] *accusing those who had not done this, he exclaims through the prophet, 'O shepherds, do the shepherds feed themselves? Do they not pasture the sheep?*[154] *With these and like words h charmed the divine man (Eusebius); digging through his voluntary prison, he ' him out and away, and entrusted to him care of the brethren.*[155] David's asce life was pursued according to the call of Paul: *the godly David, the sight whom I myself enjoyed, received the post of superior, a man who had in rea. fact, in the words of the godly Apostle, mortified his limbs upon earth.*[156] Peter the Galatian healed the mother of Theodoret in the same manner as Peter the Apostle healed Tabitha,[157]. Similarly, Limnaeus imitated the Apostles in his miracle-working: *by using the name of our Savior he ends diseases, drives out demons, and imitates the miracle-working of the Apostles.*[158]

In the Syriac life of Symeon the Stylite, Symeon is regarded as greater even than Peter and Paul in his ability to perform miracles: *it is written concerning Simeon Peter,*[159] *that his shadow as he passed by overshadowed the sick and they were healed, and it fell upon such as were very ill and they recovered. And again concerning the apostle Paul,*[160] *that his girdle or his handkerchief they took and, going, put upon such as were smitten by the Enemy, and they recovered; and upon the sick who were ill of obstinate disease, and they were delivered from their afflictions. But Mar Simeon the Blessed... did not walk upon the earth that his shadow might fall upon anyone, nor was aught of his clothing sent to the sick at any place; but only words of prayer proceeded out of his mouth and went to far-away places, and his Lord wrought healing and recovery.*[161] The Apostles Paul and Peter hold a special place in the ascetic writings of Theodoret of Cyrrhus. Their words and their examples are guiding lights in the lives of the ascetics.[162] It must be noted, however, that, for Theodoret, the imitation of the Apostles is important not only for the ascetics but for all Christians who belong to the Church of the Apostles. Theodoret relates that the prayers of James of Cyrrhestica destroyed the serpent which represented

153 Cf. *Jn.* 21, 16.
154 Cf. *Ez.* 34, 2.
155 *HR*, IV, 4; tr. 51.
156 *HR*, IV, 9; tr. 53; cf. *Col.* 3, 5.
157 Cf. *HR*, IX, 14.
158 *HR*, XXII, 3; tr. 151.
159 *Acts.* 5,15.
160 *Acts*, 19, 12.
161 *Syriac Life*, 166-167.
162 Cf. *HR*, XXXI, 5-21.

the heresy of Marcion and brought Christians back to the guidance of the Apostles: *those who were formerly of the company of Marcion, but now belong to the host of the Apostles.*[163]

CONCLUSION

It is not the purpose of the present study to consider the influence of every ıiblical personality on the Syrian ascetics, hermits, or lay-Christian ascetics. The uantity of material is enormous. One finds reference to this influence on almost very page of the works of the Syrian Fathers. In these works the prophets and Apostles are objects of love and imitation not only for the hermits; their example is of prime importance for every Christian: *And the prophets also do we love, because they also have announced the Gospel, and are hoping in him and waiting for him, by faith in whom they also obtain salvation, being united with Jesus Christ....*[164] Ignatius considers the life of the presbyters to be the image of that of the Apostles: *Those who respect and love the former also respect and love the Apostles.*[165] The *Didache* describes the ministry of the prophets as the source of power and inspiration of the bishops and deacons: *Appoint therefore for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, meek men, and not lovers of money, and truthful and approved, for they also minister to you the ministry of the prophets and teachers.*[166] Moreover, in the *Didache*, the ministry both of the prophet and the apostle derives from a single divine source; it is identical with that of the teacher or the preacher: *And concerning the Apostles and Prophets, act thus according to the ordinance of the Gospel. Let every Apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord, but let him not stay more than one day, or if need be a second as well; but if he stay three days, he is a false prophet....*[167] According to Theophilus of Antioch, the example as well as the teaching of the Prophets should be continually disseminated in the Church of God: *The men of God, who were possessed by a holy Spirit and became prophets and were inspired and instructed by God himself, were taught by God and became holy and righteous. For this reason they were judged worthy to receive*

163 *HR*, XXI, 18; tr. 140. Theodoret, *Thérapeutique*, VIII, 5, considers the Apostles as a light which enlightens the whole world: 'C'est ce que tous les hommes font en pratique. Profitant des torrent divins, loin de ridiculiser la langue des Apôtres, ils l'apprécient fort, parce qu'ils ne son pas initiés aux finesses de language: les uns qui étaient habitués à prêcher depuis leur enfance, les autres qui étaient assis aux guichets de publicains, d'autres qui exercaient le métier de cordonnier, ont apparu tout à coup comme ministre des paroles divines et dispensateurs des dons célestes, comme des sauveurs qui écartent le malheur, et des flambeaux très lumineux qui éclairent, non pas une seule nation, mais toutes celles qu'illumine le soleil que nous voyons'.

164 Ignatius of Antioch, *Phil.* V, 2; tr. 243; cf. *Smyr.*, VII, 2.

165 *Cf.* Ignatius of Antioch, *Mag.* 6, 1; *Tral.* 2, 2; 3, 1-3.

166 *Didache*, XV; tr. 331; cf. *ibid.* X, 7; XI, 7-12.

167 *Didache*, XI, 3-6; tr. 327.

the reward of becoming instruments of God and containing Wisdom from him.... All of them were consistent with one another and with themselves, and they described events which had previously occurred, events in their own time, and events which are now being fulfilled in our times. For this reason we are persuaded that their predictions of coming events will prove correct, just as the former events took place exactly.[168] In the analogy laid down in the *Didascalia* the deacons correspond to the Prophets, while the bishops are likened to Gc *Regard therefore the bishop as the mouth of God. For if Aaron, because interpreted to Pharaoh the words which were given through Moses, was calle prophet, as the Lord said to Moses: 'Behold I have given you for a god . Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be to you a prophet, why then should not you also regard them as prophets who are for you the mediators of the word, and worship them as God? But now for us ourselves, Aaron is the deacon, and Moses is the bishop. If, indeed, Moses was called a god by the Lord, let the bishop also be honoured by you as God, and the deacon as a prophet.*[169]

The *Didascalia* affirms that the teaching of the Church is one with the teaching of the twelve Apostles,[170] who are, in turn, represented by the presbyters: *But the presbyters shall be to you in the likeness of the apostles.*[171] The connection between the Prophets and the Apostles is mentioned by Aphrahat: *Moses laid his hands on his 'apostles' and they received the priesthood; and Jesus laid his hand on his 'apostles' and they received the Holy Spirit....*[172] *Jesus bar Nun, when he was dying, delivered the testimony to his people, and Jesus our Saviour, when he was taken up, delivered the testimony to his Apostles....*[173] *David handed over the kingdom to Solomon and was gathered to his people, and Jesus handed over the keys to Simon and went to his Sender....*[174] *Elisha received the spirit of Elijah, and Jesus breathed on the faces of his Apostles....*[175] In conclusion, we can see from these quotations that the Prophets and Apostles were of great importance for the spirituality of the early Syrian Church. They served as models not only for hermits and ascetics, but for all those who found themselves in some position of authority in the Church.[176]

168 Theophilus, II, 9; tr. 39.

169 *Didascalia*, IX (107); tr. 102-103. Ignatius of Antioch believes that the bishop is like 'God the Father'; cf. Ignatius, *Tral.* 3, 1; 12, 2; *Symr.* 8, 1.

170 *Didascalia*, III, (31/6); XXIV (231-232, 238).

171 *Didascalia*, IX (104); tr. 100.

172 Aphrahat, XXI, 960 (24-27).

173 Aphrahat, 961 (27)-964 (3).

174 Aphrahat, 965 (14-17).

175 Aphrahat, 968 (10-11). The translation is from Murray, *Symbols of Church*, 172.

176 Cf. more details on the importance of the Apostles in the Syrian Church in Murray, *Symbols of Church*, 171-177.

D. MARTYRDOM AND THE ASCETIC WAY

1. PERSECUTION AND MARTYRDOM BEFORE 313 A.D.

It is important to start this chapter with a brief description of persecution and martyrdom in the early Syrian Church before 313 AD. According to Ignatius of Antioch, martyrdom is a feast of heavenly joy; Ignatius asserts that he will die for Christ's sake, in order to become the pure bread of Christ: *I am writing to all the Churches, and I give injunctions to all men, that I am dying willingly for God's sake, if you do not hinder it. I beseech you, be not 'an unseasonable kindness' to me. Suffer me to be eaten by the beasts, through whom I can attain to God. I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread of Christ. Rather entice the wild beasts that they may become my tomb, and leave not a trace of my body, that when I fall asleep I be not burdensome to any. Then shall I be truly a disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world shall not even see my body. Beseech Christ on my behalf, that I may be found a sacrifice through these instruments. I do not order you as did Peter and Paul; they were Apostles, I am a convict; they were free, I am even until now a slave. But if I suffer I shall be Jesus Christ's freed man, and in him I shall rise free. Now I am learning in my bonds to give up all desires.*[177]

For Ignatius martyrdom is one way to perfection; it is the school in which a Christian may become a true disciple of Christ. Martyrdom enabled Ignatius to renounce all worldly desires and so to rise as a free man in Christ. When the altar and the sacrifice were ready Ignatius asked his fellow Christians to act not as *men-pleasers* but as *God-pleasers*. He entreated them not to prevent him from accomplishing his supreme sacrifice,[178] but rather to join together as a choir and to sing at his death: *Grant me nothing more than that I be poured out to God, while an altar is still ready, that forming yourselves into a chorus of love, you may sing to the Father in Christ Jesus, that God has vouchsafed that the bishop of Syria shall be found at the setting of the sun, having fetched him from the sun's rising. It is good to set the world towards God, that I may rise to him.*[179] Ignatius' desire for martyrdom was the outcome of his internal struggle between the visible world and the invisible, between material life and the life of the spirit. By this means he wished to *attain unto God* entirely and regarded his death as a way of following Christ's own example: *The ends of the earth and the kingdoms of this world shall profit me nothing. It is better for me to die in Christ Jesus than to be king over the ends of the earth. I seek Him who died for our sake. I desire Him who rose for us. The pains of birth are upon me. Suffer me, my brethren, hinder me not from living, do not wish me to die. Do not give to the*

177 Ignatius of Antioch, *Rom.* IV; tr. 231.
178 Cf. Ignatius, *Rom.* II, 1.
179 Ignatius, *Rom.* II, 2; tr. 229.

world one who desires to belong to God, nor deceive him with material things. Suffer me to receive the pure light, when I have come thither I shall become a man. Suffer me to follow the example of the Passion of my God. If any man have him within himself, let him understand what I wish, and let him sympathise with me, knowing the things which constrain me.[180] Ignatius regarded his struggle as one between himself and Satan, the Prince of this world: *The Prince of this world wishes to tear me in pieces, and to corrupt my mind towards God.*[181] F Ignatius, therefore, martyrdom is the personal realisation of Christ's Passion a the Resurrection, through which he may become a true Christian.[182]

Concerning persecution the *Didache* quotes the words of Jesus: *'Bless tho. that curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those that persecute you. For what credit is it to you if you love those that love you? Do not even the heathen do the same?'*[183] *But, for your part, 'love those that hate you',*[184] *and you will have no enemy....*[185] The *Odes of Solomon* takes a view of persecution and martyrdom similar to that of Ignatius. Those persecuted for God's sake will be delivered from their persecutors through God's power; accordingly they are truly risen in Him:

Those who saw me wondered,
Because I was persecuted;
And they thought that I was swallowed up,
Because I appeared to them as one of those that perish.
But my oppression
Became my deliverance....
I was holding waters in my right hand
And I endured their bitterness by my sweetness,
And I did not perish, because I was not their brother,
Nor was my birth like theirs.
And they sought my death, but were not successful,
Because I was older than their memory,
And in vain did they attack me.
And those who were after me
sought in vain to destroy

180 Ignatius, *Rom.* VI; tr. 235; cf. VIII.
181 Ignatius, *Rom.* VII; tr. 235.
182 Ignatius, *Rom.* III; IV.
183 *Mt.* 5, 44-45.
184 *Mt.* 5, 44.
185 *Didache,* 1, 3; tr. 309.

the memory of him who was before them;
Because the mind of the Most High is not to be forestalled,
And his heart is better than all wisdom.
Hallelujah.[186]

Theophilus of Antioch asserted that non-Christian Greeks persecuted the hristians because they would not accept pagan beliefs: *Thus they are eager to peak of Homer and Hesiod and the other poets, but they not only neglect but even slander 'the glory of the imperishable and only God'* (*Rom.* 1, 23)*; in addition, they have persecuted those who worship him and daily do persecute them. Moreover, they have appointed prizes and honours for those who euphoniously insult God* (Justin, *Apol.* i,4,9)*, while they have stoned and killed those who are zealous for virtue and practice a holy life, and to this day they afflict them with cruel tortures. Such men necessarily lost the wisdom of God and did not discover the truth.* [187] Similarly, Tatian accused the Greeks of hating Christians because the latter did not share the Greeks' faith in their gods: *Why, men of Greece, do you want to cause society to come to blows with us? If I refuse to take part in some people's normal activities, why should I be hated as if I were utterly loathsome?.... I refuse to worship his work of creation, brought into being for our sake. It is for us that sun and moon have come into being; then how can I worship my servants? How can I proclaim sticks and stones as Gods?*[188] Tatian warned the Greeks not to be too hostile to foreigners, among whom were the Christians: *Do not maintain a totally hostile attitude to foreigners,*[189] *men of Greece, nor resent their beliefs.* [190]

In the *Didascalia* Christians are urged to nurture a special love for those persecuted them because of their faith: *You shall not turn away your eyes from a Christian who because of the name of God and for his faith and love is condemned to the arena, or to the beasts, or to the mines. But from your labour and from the sweat of your face send to him for nourishment, and for a payment to the soldiers that guard him, that he may have relief and that care may be taken of him, so that your blessed brother be not completely afflicted. Indeed, let him that is condemned for the name of the Lord God be considered by you as a holy martyr, an angel of God, or God upon earth, one who is spiritually clothed with the Holy Spirit of God. Indeed, through him you see the Lord our Saviour,*

186 *Odes of Solomon*, XXVIII, 8-19; tr. 718-719; cf. *Ibid.* XXIX; XXXI; XLII.
187 Theophilus of Antioch, III, 30; tr. 147.
188 *Tatian*, 4; tr. 9.
189 'Tatian generally uses 'Greek' to describe the conventional culture in which he himself had been educated, 'foreign' in the common sense of non-Greek and therefore uneducated, not necessarily 'barbarous''; Whittaker, *Tatian*, 3.
190 *Tatian*, 1; tr. 3.

as he has been found worthy of the incorruptible crown, and has renewed again the witness of the passion.[191] The martyr, who was worthy to be called *an angel of God*, or even *God upon earth*, and who was *clothed with the Holy Spirit of God*, was viewed with great respect by all Christians.[192] Accordingly, the *Didascalia* encourages Christians to be proud of their faith and not to fear persecution for Christ's sake;[193] a Christian who becomes a martyr is truly a man of God: *For when a Christian is persecuted and testifies and is kille because of the faith, he becomes a man of God. And henceforth he is no mc persecuted by any man, for he is known of the Lord.*[194]

Martyrdom was held to be the imitation of Christ's passion, a manifestati of His death on the cross, and so of the cross itself. It followed that persecution for Christ's sake should be a source of joy and martyrdom an occasion to bear witness to Christ's own suffering and death: *If now He suffered thus for our sake, to redeem us, those who believe in Him, and was not ashamed, why do not we also imitate His sufferings, while He gives us endurance? And this for our own sake that we may be saved from the death of fire.... It is required of us so to pray that we shall not 'come into temptation'.*[195] *Yet if we be called to martyrdom, let us confess when we are interrogated, and when we suffer let us endure, and when we are afflicted let us rejoice, and when we are persecuted let us not be wearied.... Let us be diligent now to commit ourselves to the Lord God. And if any man be found worthy of martyrdom, let him receive it with joy, that he may deserve this so great a crown, and that his departure from this world is by martyrdom. Indeed, the Lord our Saviour has said: 'There is no disciple better than his master, but everyone shall be perfected as his master'.*[196] *Now our Lord as willing (to endure) all these His sufferings in order that He might save us. And He took it upon Himself to be beaten, and that men should blaspheme Him and spit in His face, and to drink vinegar and gall*[197]*--and at last He endured even to be hung upon the cross. Let us therefore, who are His disciples, also be His imitators....*[198] The *Didascalia* insists on the value of martyrdom and exhorts Christians not to attempt to avoid this glory: *That we must not excuse ourselves from martyrdom for the sake of Christ... if martyrdom comes to us, as men deemed worthy of all his glory that we should receive an incorruptible crown in the life everlasting--to rejoice in the great grace and in the honour and glory of*

191 *Didascalia*, XIX, 185-186; tr. 167-168.
192 Cf. *Didascalia*, XIX, 186-187.
193 Cf. *Didascalia*, XIX, 188-189.
194 *Didascalia*, XIX, 189; tr. 170.
195 *Mt.* 26, 41; 6, 13.
196 *Mt.* 10, 24; *Lk.* 6, 40.
197 *Mk.* 15, 17ff. 36.
198 *Didascalia*, XIX, 190-193; tr. 172-174.

martyrdom for God, and to accept of it joyfully with all our soul, and to believe in the Lord God who will raise us up in the light of glory.[199] Finally, in the *Didascalia*, as in Ignatius and the *Odes of Solomon*, martyrdom is held in great esteem as the way to resurrection: *However, about the resurrection, and about the glory of the martyrs, the Lord spoke in Daniel thus: 'Many that sleep in the breadth of the earth shall rise up in that day, some unto life everlasting, and some unto reproach and shame and dispersion. But those who understand shall shine as the luminaries which are in the heaven; and those who have been strengthened by the word as the stars of heaven'...,*[200] *glory as of the stars to the martyrs, however, He has promised to give a glory everlasting, as of luminaries which do not fail, with (more) excelling light, that they may be radiant for all ime.*[201]

In the *Acts of Thomas*, persecution and martyrdom are closely connected with life in prison. Both involve a time of judgement which can be used to discriminate between good and evil and to make a clear separation between light and darkness.[202] Thomas considers martyrdom to be the way to perfection, through which he fulfils the will of his Master and becomes worthy of the eternal glory of the martyrs: *'Lo, Lord, I fulfilled Thy will and became a slave, for the sake of this freedom which I am receiving today. Do Thou, Lord Jesus, give (it) to me and fulfil it with me; for I am in no doubt whatever regarding Thy truth and Thy love, but for the sake of these who are standing (by) that they may hear, I speak before Thee'. And when Judas (Thomas) had prayed thus, he said to the soldiers: 'Come, fulfil the will of him who sent you'. And the soldiers came (and) struck him all together, and he fell down and died. And the brethren were weeping all together. And they brought goodly garments and many linen cloths, and buried Judas in the sepulchre in which the ancient kings were buried*[203]

2. MARTYRDOM OF THE ASCETICS BEFORE 451 AD

Aphrahat considered the persecuted Christian to be like all the Prophets and the Apostles, and, above all, like Jesus Christ.[204] He concludes his exposition of persecution with the idea that martyrdom is the fulfilment of what is written in the book of God: *Great and excellent is the martyrdom of Jesus. He surpassed in affliction and in confession all who were before or after. And after Him was the faithful martyr Stephen whom the Jews stoned. Simon (Peter) also and Paul were perfect martyrs. And James and John walked in the footsteps of their Master Christ. Also (others) of the apostles thereafter in divers places confessed*

199 *Didascalia*, XX, 199; tr. 181.
200 *Dan.* 12, 2ff; *Didascalia*, XX, 294-295; tr. 175-176.
201 *Didascalia*, XX, 200; tr. 182.
202 Cf. Prison, p. 29.
203 *Acts of Thomas*, 167-168; tr. 153.
204 Cf. Aphrahat, I, 932-987.

and proved true martyrs. And also concerning our brethren who are in the West, in the days of Diocletian there came great affliction and persecution to the whole Church of God, which was in all their region. The Churches were overthrown and uprooted, and many confessors and martyrs made confession. And (the Lord) turned in mercy to them after they were persecuted. And also in our days these things happened to us also on account of our sins; but also that what is written might be fulfilled, even as our Redeemer said: --These things are to be.[205] *The Apostle also said: --Also over us is set this cloud of confessions;*[206] *which is our honour, wherein many confess and are slain.*[207]

The *Liber Graduum* requires ascetics to pray for those who persecute ther and never to hate their persecutors. Martyrs are killed for the sake of the Lc and we should love them and imitate their life because they love Jesus Christ.[208] In the homily *On Solitaries*, attributed to Ephrem, the author says that vigi fasting, mourning, hunger, thirst, and all the different kinds of mortification are simply ways of reenacting the sufferings of the martyrs.[209] In his ascetic life, the *ihidaya* repeated the martyrdom of those who were persecuted for Christ's sake: *your members are martyrs of hiddenness which along with martyrs are worthy of their suffering.*[210] Abraham Qidunaya was regarded as a seraph with the martyrs and saints a figure of the seraphim.[211] On many occasions the *Historia Religiosa* tells of the hermits' special love for the martyrs. While returning from Antioch to his ascetic cell, for example, Julian Saba made a special visit to the shrine of Dionysius: *After these and similar achievements he decided to return finally to his ascetic cell. Making his journey through Cyrrhus--this city is two stages from Antioch--, he lodged at the shrine of the victorious martyr Dionysius.*[212] Marana and Cyra made a similar visit to the place of the martyr Thecla in Isauria: *Conceiving a desire to behold as well the shrine of the triumphant Thecla*[213] *in Isauria, in order from all sources to kindle the firebrand of their love for God.*[214]

205 *Mt.* 24, 6; *Lk.* 21, 9.
206 *Heb.* 1, 1.
207 Aphrahat, XXI, 988-989; tr. 401-402.
208 Cf. *Liber Graduum*, 869-877.
209 Cf. Lamy, *Hymni et Sermones*, IV, 213-216.
210 Lamy, *Hymni et Sermones*, 215; the translation is from Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 100.
211 *Abraham Qidunaya*, IV, 22-23.
212 *HR*, II, 21; tr. 33. Regarding the date of this shrine cf. Dussaud, *Topographie*, 479.
213 'The first mention of pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thecla in Isauria occurs in Gregory Nazianzen and Egeria in the 380's. The most distinguished Syrian pilgrim was Theodoret of Mopsuestia (+428), who visited the shrine to ask for the gift of interpreting the scriptures', Price, *History of the Monks*, 185; cf. Canivet, *Monachisme syrien*, 278.
214 *HR*, XXIX, 7; tr. 184.

Symeon the Stylite travelled to the shrine of the holy martyrs to discover his ascetic vocation: *Therefore, having received the seeds of the divine word and stored them well in the deep furrows of his soul, he hastened--he said--to a nearby shrine of the holy martyrs.*[215] *In it he bent his knees and forehead to the ground, and besought the One who wishes to save all men to lead him to the perfect path of piety. After he had spent a long time in this way, a sweet sleep came upon him, and he had the following dream: 'I seemed,' he said, 'to be digging foundations, and then hear someone standing by saying that I had to make the trench deeper. After adding to its depth as he told me, I again tried to take a rest; but once more he ordered me to dig and not relax my efforts. After charging me a third and a fourth time to do this, he finally said the depth was sufficient, and told me to build effortlessly from now on, since the effort had abated and the building would be effortless.' This prediction is confirmed by the event, for the facts surpass nature. Getting up from there, he repaired to the dwelling of some neighboring ascetics.*[216] During his struggle with the Marcionites, Theodoret relates, a demon told him that the relics of the *choir of martyrs* were protecting him from their fierce attacks; the relics were his protection against the devil: *Once by night there came a wicked demon who exclaimed in Syriac, 'Why, Theodoret, do you make war on Marcion? Why on earth have you joined battle with him? What harm has he ever done to you? End the war, stop your hostility, or you will learn by experience how good it is to stay quiet. Know well that I would long ago have pierced you through, if I had not seen the choir of the martyrs with James protecting you'.... I realized that by 'the choir of martyrs' was meant the flask of oil of the martyrs, with a blessing gathered from very many martyrs, which was hung up by my bed; and under my head lay an old cloak of the great James, which for me had been stronger than any defences of steel.*[217]

Veneration of the relics of the martyrs also occupied James of Cyrrhestica, who honoured the relics of John the Baptist and of all martyrs.[218] Thalelaeus converted a whole village to Christ and built a shrine for the martyrs on the site of a pagan temple: *In consequence, all this people, formerly in the grip of impiety, have disowned their ancestral imposture and accepted the splendor of divine light. With their assistance he has demolished the precinct of demons and erected a great shrine to the triumphant martrys, opposing to those falsely called gods the godly dead.*[219] Theodosius *was buried in the shrine of the holy martyrs.*

215 This place is still unidentified, cf. Canivet, *Histoire* II, 163.

216 *HR*, XXVI, 3-4; tr. 161. 'Cette première période de vie ascétique correspond aux années 400-402--cet ascétérion n'est pas nécessairement un couvent de cénobites complètement retranchés du monde', Canivet, *Histoire* II, 165.

217 *HR*, XXI, 15-16; tr. 139-140.

218 Cf. *HR*, XXI, 19-20.

obtaining the same abode and roof as Julian the victorious contestant in piety; the same tomb received him that received also the inspired and blessed Aphrahat.[220] Macedonius was also buried in the same place as Theodosius and Aphrahat.[221] Similarly, Zebinas was buried with martrys: *He shares the same roof with martyrs who contended in Persia and are honored by us with annual festivals.*[222] Despite the fact that he did not suffer martyrdom, Jacob of Nisibis was included in a martyrology preserved in a manuscript dated 411 AD.[223] In the *Acta Martyrum*, as well as in other Syriac documents, we learn of many monks who were tortured and killed under the Persian kings Sharpur II and Yazdgard I. Believers would bury these martyrs and build churches and monasteries which were named after them.[224] The life of the martyr and that of the mortified monk were seen as essentially the same and it was normal in early Syrian Christianity to project the cult of martyrs onto the monks. The latter we considered the new martyrs of the Church.[225]

3. MARTYRDOM OR HATRED: THE HERMITS AND PAGANISM

The hostility between paganism and Christianity is well documented and is clearly described by the early Syrian writers. For them, Christianity, which preaches the unity of God and calls for a life of love among people, is superior to paganism.[226] The Syrian Christian Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries did not alter their Church's position towards paganism in any way. On the contrary, the struggle between the two religions became stronger than ever. After the Edict of Milan (313), Christianity was liberated socially and politically, and paganism gradually weakened. In the present context one need not dwell on the hostility between Christianity and paganism after 313. We are interested only in the rôle of the Solitaries in this struggle. For them, paganism represented a demonic force and they were ready to suffer and die in their fight against it. Some hermits

219 *HR*, XXVIII, 5; tr. 182.
220 *HR*, X, 8; tr. 92.
221 Cf. *HR*, XIII, 19.
222 *HR*, XXIV, 2; tr. 155.
223 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 141-142.
224 Cf. *Acta Martyrum*, IV, 182ff.; cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 230, 262, 283, 292-302; Nau, *Martyrologes et ménologes*, 64, 114.
225 'The prestige of the monks gained greatly by a significant process of assimilation which took place between the veneration of monks and the cult of martyrs. Thereby the cult-forms that belonged to the martyrs were carried over to the monks. In places where they had lived or at their tombs, 'martyria' were erected.... In addition to the 'martyria' the introduction of the practice of celebrating the commemoration days of the monks reflects another link between the cult of the martyrs and the veneration of the monks. Syrian Christians established this practice very early', Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 322.
226 Cf. Theophilus of Antioch, I,1; II,22-35; Taian, 13-14; 18-26; 31.

chose a pagan temple as the setting for their ascetic life: *Maron repaired to a hill-top formerly honored by the impious;*[227] and *Thalelaeus repaired to a hill on which there was a precinct dedicated to demons and honored with many sacrifices by the impious of old. Here he pitched a small hut. They always served those miscreants, they said, in an attempt to appease by service their great cruelty, for they caused harm to many passing by or of the neighborhood....*[228]

Symeon the Elder converted the people of Amanus to the Christian faith: *this mountain, previously burdened with much polytheist madness, he cultivated with many miracles....*[229] Alexander Akoimetos set the fire into a pagan temple and destroyed it: *Then he* (Alexander) *heard that the work of the evil one reigned in a certain city; for the people were constantly keeping festivals for their idols, and rejoicing in their nefarious deeds. Girding up his loins with the preparation of the Gospel, he went into their famous temple and, by the power of God, set fire to it and destroyed it. After performing this feat he did not leave the area, but stayed in that temple.*[230] Attacks against paganism were one of the hermits' primary concerns. For them, paganism was the realm of Satan and it was essential to wipe it out. For those hermits who sought martyrdom, however, attacks on paganism represented a way to death. It is noted that Rabbula failed to achieve the martyrdom he hoped for when he attacked the pagan temple of Baalbeck.[231] In response to Christian persecution, Libanius, the pagan Syrian philosopher from Antioch, wrote a letter to the Roman Emperor Theodosius, entitled *Pro Templis*. In it he asked for increased protection and freedom for the pagan religion.[232]

227 *HR*, XVI, 1; tr. 117.

228 *HR*, XXVIII, 1; tr. 180.

229 *HR*, VI, 4; tr. 64.

230 Stoop, *Alexander*, 9.

231 'He (Rabbula) went from austerity to austerity, living for a time as a hermit in the desert in the hope of being killed by the wild Arabs, and then going with his friend Eusebius to Baalbek in order to obtain the crown of martyrdom by raising a disturbance in the great Temple.... But the crown of martyrdom was not destined for Rabbula, and the two enthusiasts only succeeded in getting themselves thrown down the temple steps', Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity*, 50.

232 Libanius was born in 314 A.D. in Antioch, and came from a noble family. He was educated in Greek philosophy, and became a teacher in Antioch. Many famous personalities in Antioch were his disciples, among them, John Chrysostom and Theodoret of Cyrrhus. His death occurred either late in the fourth century or early in the fifth: 'His last known oration is dated to A.D. 392, and his last letters to the following year, after which nothing more is known of him. The recent suggestion of Lacombrade (*Mél. Henri Grégoire*, 2, 361ff.) identifying him with the unnamed nonagenarian mentioned by Synesius and so implying that he was still living in A.D. 404, is incapable of proof', Norman, *Libanius*, xlii-xliii; cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 91-179.

A famous passage from the letter concerns those monks who were behaving with great violence towards the pagans in Syria, seeking the destruction of all pagan temples and idols: *You* (Theodosius) *then have neither ordered the closure of temples nor banned entrance to them. From the temples and altars you have banished neither fire nor incense nor the offerings of other perfumes. But this black-robed tribe, who eat more than elephants and, by the quantities of drink they consume, weary those that accompany their drinking with the singing of hymns, who hide these excesses under an artificially contrived pallor--these people, Sire, while the law yet remains in force , hasten to attack the temples with sticks and stones and bars of iron, and in some cases, disdaining these, with hand and feet. Then utter desolation follows, with the stripping of roofs, demolition of walls, the tearing down of statues and the overthrow of altars, and the priests must either keep quiet or die. After demolishing one, they scurry to another, and to a third, and trophy is piled on trophy, in contravention of th law. Such outrages occur even in the cities, but they are most common in t countryside. Many are the foes who perpetrate the separate attacks, but a their countless crimes this scattered rabble congregates and calls for a tally their activities, and they are in disgrace unless they have committed the foule outrage. So they sweep across the countryside like rivers in spate, and by ravaging the temples, they ravage the estates, for wherever they tear out a temple from an estate, that estate is blinded and lies murdered. Temples, Sire, are the soul of the countryside; they mark the beginning of its settlement, and have been passed down through many generations to the men of today. In them the farming communities rest their hopes for husbands, wives, children, for their oxen and the soil they sow and plant. An estate that has suffered so has lost the inspiration of the peasantry together with their hopes, for they believe that their labour will be in vain once they are robbed of the gods who direct their labours to their due end....*[233] *So the outrages committed by these hooligans against the estates bear upon vital matters of state. They claim to be attacking the temples, but these attacks are a source of income, for, though some assail the shrines, others plunder the wretched peasantry of what they have, both the produce stored from the land and their stock; and the invaders depart with the loot from the places they have stormed. Others are not satisfied with this, but they appropriate the land too, claiming that what belongs to this or that body is temple property, and many a man has been robbed of his family acres on this false title. Others, again, claim to worship their god with fasting, and yet grow fat on the misfortunes of other folk. And if the victims of this looting come to the 'pastor' in town--for that is the title they give to a fellow who is not that he*

233 'Thus neglect of the gods is held to produce the famines which had been prevalent since A.D. 382; cf. *Symm. Rel.* 3. 15ff', Norman, *Libanius*, II, 110.

should be--,[234] *if they come and tearfully recount their wrongs, this pastor commends the looters and sends the victims packing with the assurance that they are lucky to have got off so lightly. Yet, Sire, these victims are your subjects too, and as workers are more useful than idlers, so are they more useful than their oppressors. These are as the bees, those the drones. And if they hear that an estate has something worth looting, it is straight away involved in sacrifices and is committing all manner of crimes: an armed visitation is called for, and up come the justices,*[235] *which is the term they use to describe these--for want of a better word--footpads, for footpads at least try not to be found out, and they deny their misdeeds. Call one of them a footpad and you insult him. But this crew flaunt their excesses, boast of them, advertise them to those who are unaware of them, and claim that they should be rewarded. But it is nothing else than war in peacetime waged against the peasantry. Ill-usage at the hands of their fellows is no alleviation for their misfortunes, except for the fact that it is even worse that hose allies they might normally have had in times of trouble are responsible for heir experiencing the above-mentioned outrages in time of peace.*[236]

Libanius continues with the accusation that the monks totally failed to respect the peaceful life of the non-Christian people of the region. Formerly, these non-Christian Syrians gathered each week to celebrate their faith: *they were in the habit of drinking together amid the scent of every kind of incense, they broke no law, nor yet if in their toasts they sang hymns and invoked the gods, unless indeed to use a man's private life as grounds for accusation. It used to be the custom for country folk to assemble in large numbers at the homes of the village notables at holiday time, to make a sacrifice and then hold a feast. This they did while ever it was permitted to do so, and thereafter all the rest with the exception of sacrifice, remained permissible....*[237] With the imperial decree of December 21, 381, Theodosius had forbidden sacrifices in pagan temples: *If any madman or sacriligious person, so to speak, should immerse himself in forbidden sacrifices, by day or by night, as a consulter of uncertain events, and if he should suppose that he should employ, or should think that he should approach, a shrine or a temple for the commission of such a crime, he shall know that he will be subjected to proscription, since We give warning by Our just provision that God must be worshipped by chaste prayers and not be profaned by dire incantations.*[238] This Decree was reinforced by a second, made on May 25, 385.

234 'I.e., the bishop, with his ecclesiastical court. The term was,of course, current in Christian circles, but arouses Libanius' ire because it was also one of his own expressions to signify his relation as sophist with his pupils', Norman, *Libanius* II, 111.

235 'The are a type of rural police, cf. *Marc. Diac. Vit. Porph.*, p. 22. Here their function is usurped by the monks', Norman, *Libanius* II, 112.

236 Libanius, *Oration*, XXX, 8-13; tr. 107-113.

237 Libanius, *Oration*, XXX, 18-19; tr. 117.

which says: *No mortal shall assume the audacity of performing sacrifices so that by the inspection of the liver and the presage of the entrails of the sacrificial victims, he may obtain the hope of a vain promise, or, what is worse, he may learn the future by an accursed consultation. The torture of a very bitter punishment shall threaten those persons who, in violation of Our prohibition, attempt to explore the truth of present or future events.*[239] With a further Decree of November 8, 392, offerings of incense to pagan gods were completely banned: *No person at all, of any class or order whatsoever of men or of dignities, whether he occupies a position of power or has completed such honors, whether he is powerful by the lot of birth or is humble in lineage, legal status and fortune, shall sacrifice an innocent victim to senseless images in any place at all or in any city. He shall not, by more secret wickedness, venerate his lar with fire, his genius with wine, his penates with fragrant odors; he shall n burn lights to them, place incense before them, or suspend wreaths for them.*

1. But if any man should dare to immolate a victim for the purpose sacrifice, or to consult the quivering entrails, according to the example of . person guilty of high treason he shall be reported by an accusation which is permitted to all persons, and he shall receive the appropriate sentence, even though he has inquired nothing contary to, or with reference to, the welfare of the Emperors. For it is sufficient to constitute an enormous crime that any person should wish to break down the very laws of nature, to investigate forbidden matters, to disclose hidden secrets, to attempt interdicted practices, to seek to know the end of another's life, to promise the hope of another person's death.

2. But if any person should venerate, by placing incense before them, images made by the work of mortals and destined to suffer the ravages of time, and if, in a ridiculous manner, he should suddenly fear the effigies which he himself has formed, or should bind a tree with fillets[240] *or should erect an altar of turf that he has dug up, or should attempt to honor vain images with the offering of a gift, which even though it is humble, still is a complete outrage against religion, such person as one guilty of the violation of religion, shall be punished by the forfeiture of that house or landholding in which it is proved that he served a pagan superstition. For We decree that all places shall be annexed to Our fisc, if it is proved that they have reeked with the vapor of incense, provided, however, that such places are proved to have belonged to such incense burners.*

238 *Theodosian Code*, 16,10.7; tr. 473. (Given on the twelfth day before the Kalends of January at Constantinople in the year of the consulship of Eucherius and Syagrius.)

239 *Theodosian Code*, 16, 10.9; tr. 473. (Given on the eighth day before the Kalends of June at Constantinople in the year of the first consulship of Arcadius Augustus and the consulship of the Most Noble Bauto.)

240 Cf. the Rule of Rabbula to the Qyama, 53

3. But if any person should attempt to perform any such kind of sacrifice in public temples or shrines, or in the buildings or fields of others, and if it is proved that such places were usurped without the knowledge of the owners, the offender shall be compelled to pay twenty-five pounds of gold as a fine. If any person should connive at such a crime, he shall be held subject to the same penalty as that of the person who performed the sacrifice.

4. It is Our will that this regulation shall be so enforced by the judges, as well as by the defenders and decurions of the several cities, that the information learned by the defenders and decurions shall be immediately reported to the courts, and the crimes so reported shall be punished by the judges. Moreover, if the defenders and decurions should suppose that any such crime should be concealed through favoritism or overlooked through carelessness, they shall be subjected to judicial indignation. If the judges should be advised of such crimes nd should defer punishment through connivance, they shall be fined thirty ounds of gold; their office staffs also shall be subjected to an equal penalty.[241]

The process went a step further when, on July 10, 399, Arcadius ordered the demolition of all temples and altars in rural areas: *If there should be any temples in the country districts, they shall be torn down without disturbance or tumult. For when they are torn down and removed, the material basis for all superstition will be destroyed.*[242]

Despite such measures, the monks continued to destroy pagan meeting-places, to spoil pagans' property, and to subject them to torture. As Libanius remarks to the emperor: *I forbear to mention the numbers they have murdered in their riotings in utter disregard of the name they share,*[243] *in case such incidents be described as due to overhasty action: but your expulsion of people who by their personal care provided relief for poverty among old men and women and fatherless children,*[244] *the majority of them suffering from severe physical handicaps--is not this murder? Isn't it execution? Isn't this sentencing them to death, and to a death worse than ever, by starvation? For when their means of support have gone, this is surely the fate in store for them.*

241 *Theodosian Code*, 16.10.12; tr. 473-474. (Given on the sixth day before the Ides of November at Constantinople in the year of the second consulship of Arcadius Augustus and the consulship of Rufinus.)

242 *Theodosian Code*, 16, 10.16; tr. 474-475. (Given on the sixth day before the Ides of July--July 10. Posted at Damascus in the year of the consulship of the Most Noble Theodorus--399.)

243 'As had happened in A.D. 361 (the lynching of George of Cappadocia) and was to occur in A.D. 391 at the overthrow of the Serapeum, cf. Sozom, *HE*, vii.14; Julian had described the Christians in their religious quarrels as being worse than wild beasts', Norman, *Libanius* II. 119.

244 On social welfare in the pagan temple, cf. *Oration*, 2, 30; Norman, *Libanius* II, 119.

Then in massacring their protectors, you have been massacring these innocents, but you would not dream of doing so if they had broken the law! This by-passing of the courts of law is proof that their victims did not offer sacrifices. This killing without trial is a confession that there are not good grounds to try [245] Libanius states emphatically that the non-Christian Syrian people respected the emperor's decrees. According to him, even though the pagans had stopped making sacrifice to pagan deities, the Christian monks continued to vandalise their shrines and force them to adopt Christianity: *And if they* (the monks) *prate to me* (to Libanius) *of the teachings of the scriptures that they profess to obey, I will counter them with the despicable acts they have committed. If this were not so, they would not be living on the fat of the land. As it is, we know how they spend their days--and their nights. How improbable it is for those who have no qualn about that to be so punctilious about this! In estate after estate shrine af shrine has been wiped out by their insolence, violence, greed and deliberate lc of self-control. For instance, in the city of Beroea there was a bronze statute Asclepius, in the likeness of the handsome son of Cleinias.... Yet this statue, Sire, so carefully made no doubt with much toil and brilliant genius, has been broken up and exists no more.... At Beroea, though they could not allege any sacrifice, they yet smashed to smithereens the likeness of Alcibiades, or of Asclepius... similarly, we must believe their outrages in the countryside to fall into the same pattern. No one has sacrificed any victim, yet the temples, great and small alike, in which the weary used to find repose, have all been demolished, and those who have suffered this loss are like ship-wrecked mariners, swept from the ships in which they sailed.*[246]

In spite of the imperial decrees and the incessant attacks of the monks, the non-Christian Syrians did not convert to Christianity. Rather, as Libanius makes clear, it confirmed them in their ancestral faith and reinforced their resistance to any power which sought to alter their beliefs: *Everybody knows that, as a result of their very sufferings, people have become more confirmed than ever in their faith,*[247] *just as in physical desire the lover has only to be barred from the act and he does it all the more and becomes more ardent towards the same object of his affections. If such conversion could be effected simply by the destruction of temples, they would have been long ago destroyed by your decree, for you would long since have been glad to see this conversion. But you knew that you could not, and so you never laid a finger on these shrines. These people, even if they looked forward to some such result, ought to have advanced towards it in step with you and should have let the emperor share in their ambition. It would have*

245 Libanius, *Oration*, 20; tr. 119.

246 Libanius, *Oration*, XXX, 21-23; tr. 121-123.

247 'Libanius here regretfully accepts Theodosius' christianizing policy, but insists that he, unlike these monks, promotes it by due force of laws'. Norman, *Libanius* II, 125.

been better, surely, to succeed in their objective by staying on the right side of the law rather than by abusing it.[248]

Amidst the attempts to force pagans to convert to Christianity, apostasy seems to have become common. The emperor Theodosius made certain decrees which threatened those who reverted to their ancient cults: *If Christians and those confirmed in the faith have turned to pagan rites and cults, We deny them all power to make a testament in favor of any person whatsoever, so that they shall be outside the Roman law....*[249] Libanius recognizes that some non-Christians attended Christian worship, though he accounts for this fact by arguing that they did so only under duress. In his view, as he says to the Theodosius, they did not become true Christians: *And if they* (the Christians) *tell you that some other people have been converted by such measures and now hare their religious beliefs, do not overlook the fact that they speak of onversions apparent, not real. Their converts have not really been hanged--they only say they have. This does not mean that they have exchanged one faith for another--only that this crew have been bamboozled. They* (the pagans) *go to their ceremonies, join their crowds, go everywhere where these do, but when they adopt an attitude of prayer, they either invoke no god at all or else they invoke the gods. It is no proper invocation from such a place, but it is an invocation for all that. In plays, the actor who takes the part of a tyrant is not a tyrant, but just the same as he was before putting on the mask: so here, everyone keeps himself unchanged, but he lets them think he has been changed.*[250]

Libanius doubts the value of such conversions. The hearts of the so-called 'converted' were not with the God of the Christians and their lips could not even pronounce His name. Such conversions could not have been made according to God's will because Christ and His Apostles did not force anyone to accept the word of God. When he addresses the emperor, Libanius regrets such behaviour: *Now what advantage have they won when adherence to their doctrine is a matter of words and the reality is absent? Persuasion is required in such matters, not constraint. If persuasion fails and constraint is employed, nothing has been accomplished, though you think it has. It is said that in their very own rules it does not appear, but that persuasion meets with approval and compulsion is deplored. Then why these frantic attacks on the temples, if you cannot persuade and must needs resort to force? In this way you would obviously be breaking your own rules.*[251] Libanius accuses the monks of being violent and ignorant. They regard themselves as philosophers but they are uneducated people:

248 Libanius, *Oration*, XXX, 26-27; tr. 125.
249 *Theodosian Code*, 16, 7.2; tr. 465.
250 Libanius, *Oration*, XXX, 28; tr. 127.
251 Libanius, *Oration*, XXX, 29; tr. 127.

These people who have cast aside tongs, hammers and anvils and now claim to discourse upon heaven and its occupants--let any of them tell me which it was the Romans followed, when from such small and humble beginning they attained supreme power.[252] From the testimony of Libanius, and from other sources, it becomes apparent that, during the late fourth century, paganism was still flourishing. This was true not only of the Syrian Orient but also of the West, especially Rome.[253] We should note, however, that attacks against pagan temples were also instigated by the imperial army: *What need to destroy what can be applied to another use? It is surely disgraceful for an army to wage war upon stones of its own, and the general in charge to direct it against towering structures, erected long ago with great zeal, whose completion was the occasi for a festival for monarchs of yester-year....*[254]

Libanius accused the emperor of indecision in the matter of non-Christ religions in Syria. Although he did not actually order their extermination i made no attempt to intervene with the violent monks and clergy.[255] Finally, Libanius warns the emperor of the deteriorating situation between Christians and non-Christians. This had reached the point where, if the emperor would not defend them against the attacks of the monks, the pagans would soon be obliged to defend themselves: *If, Sire, you commend and command such actions, we will put up with them* (monks and fanatic Christians), *not without sorrow, but we will demonstrate that we have been schooled to obedience. But if these people without your permission proceed to attack anything that has escaped them or has been hastily restored, you may be sure that the landowners will defend both themselves and the law.*[256] Clearly, there was no love lost between the non-Christian Syrians and the monks. The latter were regarded as rude and violent. So much so that, in his seventh *oration*, Julian the Apostate uses their name to insult the Cynic, Heracleios:[257] *What do you gain by travelling about in all directions and wearing out the very mules you ride? Yes, and I hear that you wear out the mule drivers as well, and that they dread the sight of you Cynics*

252 Libanius, *Oration*, XXX, 31; tr. 129.

253 Cf. Libanius, *Oration*, XXX, 31-54.

254 Libanius, *Oration*, XXX, 43; tr. 141, cf. also *Oration*, XXX, 44-47. Theodoret, *HE*, 5. 21 recounts the destruction of the temple at Apamea by the bishop Marcellus. He was 'the first of all to use the law (i.e., *C. Th.* 16.10.9) as a weapon,' by calling in the Comes Orientis and troops to destroy it. In A.D. 391 Theophilus is to do the same and call up troops for the destruction of the Searpeum', Norman, *Libanius*, 140.

255 Cf. Libanius, *Libanius*, 52-54.

256 Libanius, *Libanius*, 55; tr. 151.

257 Flavius Claudius Julianus was born in 331 A.D. He became Roman Emperor of the East in 355 A.D. and resided at Antioch. He was educated as a Christian but later adopted paganism, rejecting his Christian education. Julian died on June 27, 363. Cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 63-89.

even more than of soldiers. For I am told that some of you belabour them more cruelly with your staffs than do the soldiers with their swords, so that they are naturally more afraid of you. Long ago I gave you a nickname and now I think I will write it down. It is 'monks',[258] *a name applied to certain persons by the impious Galileans* (Christians). *They are for the most part men who by making small sacrifices gain much or rather everything from all sources, and in addition secure honour, crowds of attendants and flattery. Something like that is your method, except perhaps for uttering divine revelations: but this is not your custom, though it is ours; for we are wiser than those insensate men. And perhaps too there is this difference that you have no excuse for levying tribute on specious pretexts as they do; which they call 'alms', whatever that may mean. But in all other respects your habits and theirs are very much alike. Like them you have abandoned your country, you wander about all over the world, and you gave more trouble than they did at my headquarters, and were more insolent.*[259]

In Julian's opinion, Christianity and paganism were engaged in a process of mutual self-destruction. Julian, however, regards Christianity as a form of atheism. Thus, when he addresses the Christians: *But as for Christ you love him, you say, and adopt him as the guardian of your city instead of Zeus and the god of Daphne and Calliope*[260] *who revealed your clever invention? Did those citizens of Emesa long for Christ who set fire to the tombs of the Galileans?*[261] *But what citizens of Emesa have I ever annoyed? I have however annoyed many of you, I may almost say all, the Senate, the weathly citizens, the common people. The latter indeed, since they have chosen atheism, hate me for the most part, or rather all of them hate me because they see that I adhere to the ordinances of the sacred rites which our fore-fathers observed.....*[262] According to Julian the characteristics governing Christianity at this time were revenge, the desire to destroy enemies, and to impose the Christian faith on non-Christians: *You emulate the rages and the bitterness of the Jews, overturning temples and altars,*[263] *.and you slaughtered not only those of us who remained true to the teachings of their Fathers, but also men who were as much astray as yourselves.*[264] *But these are rather your own doings; for nowhere did either*

258 'Or 'solitaries'; the word also means 'heretic'; but Julian evidently alludes to Christian monks who lived on charity', Wright, *Julian*, II, 123.

259 Julian, *Oration*, VII, 224; tr. 123.

260 'There was a statue of Calliope in the market-place at Antioch', Wright, *Julian*, II. 475.

261 'The people of Emesa burned the Christian churches and spared only one, which they converted into a temple of Dionysius', Wright, *Julian*, II, 475.

262 Julian, *Misopogon*, 357; tr. 475-476.

263 In the *Misopogon*, Julian accused the Christians of destroying pagan temples: 'But now consider your own behaviour. Many of you overturned the altars of the gods which had only just been erected, and with difficulty did my indulgent treatment teach you to keep quiet.....'. *Misopogon*, 361; tr. 485.

Jesus or Paul hand down to you such commands. The reason for this is that they never even hoped that you would one day attain to such power as you have; for they were content if they could delude maidservants and slaves, and through them the women, and men like Cornelius[265] *and Sergius.*[266] *But if you can show me that one of these men is mentioned by the well-known writers of that time,--these events happened in the reign of Tiberius or Claudius,--then you may consider that I speak falsely about all matters.*[267] In his letter *To the Citizens of Bostra* Julian refers to the massacre of the Arians by those Christians who considered themselves Orthodox. He again remarks that the Orthodox Christians did not only persecute the Arians; they also continued to persecu' non-Christians:

I thought that the leaders of the Galilaeans would be more grateful to than to my predecessor in the administration of the Empire. For in his reign *happened to the majority of them to be sent into exile, prosecuted, and cast into prison, and moreover, many whole communities of those who are called 'heretics'* [268] *were actually butchered, as at Samosata and Cyzicus, in Paphlagonia, Bithynia, and Galatia, and among many other tribes also villages were sacked and completely devastated; whereas, during my reign, the contrary has happened. For those who had been exiled have had their exile remitted, and those whose property was confiscated have, by a law of mine received permission to recover all their possessions.*[269] *Yet they have reached such a pitch of raving madness and folly that they are exasperated because they are not allowed to behave like tyrants or to persist in the conduct in which they at one time indulged against one another, and afterwards carried on towards us who revered the gods. They therefore leave no stone unturned, and have the audacity to incite the populace to disorder and revolt, whereby they both act with impiety towards the gods and disobey my edicts, humane though these are. At least I do not allow a single one of them to be dragged against his will to worship; at the altars; nay, I proclaim in so many words that, if any man of his own free will choose to take part in our lustral rites and libations, he ought first of all to offer sacrifices of purification and supplicate the gods that avert evil.... It is, at any rate, evident that the populace who have been led into error by those who are called 'clerics', are in revolt because this license has been taken from them. For those who have till now behaved like tyrants are not content that they are not punished for their former crimes, but, longing for the power they had before,*

264 He refers to the heretical Arians.
265 Cf. *Acts*, 10.
266 Cf. *Acts*, 13, 6-12.
267 Julian, *Against the Galilaeans*, 206; tr. III, 377.
268 Constantius persecuted Christians who did not belong to the Arian sect.
269 Cf. Sozomen, *HE*, 5, 5.

because they are no longer allowed to sit as judges and draw up wills and appropriate the inheritances of other men and assign everything to themselves, they pull every string of disorder, and, as the proverb says, lead fire through a pipe to fire, and dare to add even greater crimes to their former wickedness by leading on the populace to disunion. Therefore I have decided to proclaim to all communities of citizens, by means of this edict, and to make known to all, that they must not join in the feuds of the clerics or be induced by them to take stones in their hands or disobey those in authority; but they may hold meetings for as long as they please and may offer on their own behalf the prayers to which they are accustomed; that, on the other hand, if the clerics try to induce them to take sides on their behalf in quarrels, they must no longer consent to do so, if they would escape punishment.[270]

There is no doubt that monks began to gain some power in the society of the Syrian Orient during the fourth century. Many, however, were violent and unsociable men, constantly trying to intervene in social affairs and to nourish the hostility between Christians and non-Christians.[271] Yet it was not only in the Syrian Orient that the monks behaved so barbarically to non-Christians; such an attitude was ubiquitous.[272] The increase of monastic influence in society was the cause of many violent incidents between Christians and pagans. Eventually the emperor was obliged to intervene. He put a temporary end to the presence of monks in society: *1. Emperors Valentinian, Theodosius, and Arcadius Augustuses to Tatianus, Praetorian Prefect. If any persons should be found in the profession of monks, they shall be ordered to seek out and to inhabit desert places and desolate solitudes.*[273] Less than two years later, on April 17, 392, this

270 Julian, *Letters*, 41 (436); tr. III, 129-31. On this subject, Wright, *Julian*, 130 adds: 'Julian no longer allowed legacies to be left to churches; cf. *Codex Theodos.* 3.1.3. The clergy and especially the bishops had exercised certain civil functions of which Julian deprived them, and they lost the immunity from taxation that had been granted by Christian emperors. For this cf. Sozomen, 5, 5. The letter of Julian to Bostra 'is cited by Sozoman, 5, 15. Bostra, or Bosra, was one of the largest fortified cities in Arabia and is described by Ammianus 14.8.13 as *murorum firmitate cautissima*', Wright, *History*, 129.

271 Cf. Dudden, Vol. II, 372.

272 Dudden, *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose*, I, 144 says: 'Enthusiasm for the ascetic life was not, however, by any means universal. At the funeral of Blaesilla in Rome there was a popular demonstration against the monks (Hieron. *Ep.* 39. 5). The ladies and clergy of the city were constantly carping at them (*ibid.* 54.5) and the rabble called them insulting names (*ibid.* 38.5; 54.5). The word 'monk' was for long a term of reproach among the Romans (*ibid.* 127.8). In Gaul, Martin of Tours, by reason of his ascetic ways, incurred the dislike of many of the bishops (Sulplicius, *Vita S. Martini*, 27). In Spain, also, the ecclesiastical authorities were generally unfriendly to asceticism. In Africa the pale faces and sombre garb of the monks were jeered at in the streets (Salvian, *De Gubern Dei*, viii. 21, 22)'. Eunapius describes the violent behaviour of Egyptian monks towards pagans, cf. Wright, *Eunapius. Lives of the Sophists*, 423.

273 'The earlier monks were hermits. Many of then were religious fanatics, and as opponents of

was followed by another injunction: 2. *The same Augustuses to Tatianus, Praetorian Prefect. We direct that the monks to whom the municipalities had been forbidden, since they are strengthened by judicial injustices, shall be restored to their original status, and the aforesaid law shall be repealed. Thus indeed We revoke such a decree of Our Clemency, and We grant them free ingress into the towns.*[274]

In spite of its vigour, paganism was condemned to complete extinction in the Syrian Orient. The whole of Christendom was hostile to its existence and thousands of fanatic Christian monks virtually put an end to this religion.[275] Yet the fourth century, which was dominated by the fierce struggle betwee Christianity and paganism, did not erase all traces of paganism. Not only in t Syrian Orient but throughout its domains, Christianity incorporated many pa elements into its religious practices. Paganism was especially influential on Christian cult of the martyrs and the saints.[276] The emperor Julian, for exampl asserts that Christian martyrs have become the gods of the Christians, even though they were wretched men. In this context Julian mocks the faith of the Christians, concentrating on Christ Himself, whom he regards as a mere man. Contrasting them with non-Christians, he accuses the Christians of intolerance and rudeness: *But what great gift of this sort do the Hebrews boast of as bestowed on them by God, the Hebrews who have persuaded you to desert to them? If you had at any rate paid heed to their teachings, you would not have fared altogether ill, and though worse than you did before, when you were with us, still your condition would have been bearable and supportable. For you would be worshipping one god instead of many, not a man* (Jesus Christ), *or rather many wretched men* (the martyrs). *And though you would be following a law that is harsh and stern and contains much that is savage and barbarous,*

social and political injustices they frequently incited sedition and riots. The oppression of the judges succeeded in making them more popular with the masses whose cause they championed, 16,4, 1-2; 16,2, n. 124; 16,5, n. 1; 9,40, 15-16', Pharr, *Theodosian Code*, 449. (Given on the fourth day before the Nones of September at Verona in the year of the fourth consulship of Valentinian Augustus and the consulship of Neoterius--September 2, 390).

274 Theodosian Code, 16.3; tr. 449. (Given on the fifteenth day before the Kalends of May at Constantinople in the year of the second consulship of Arcadius Augustus and the consulship of Rufinus.)

275 'A la fin du IV siècle de notre ère, le paganisme, à l'agonie, voyait renverser ses statues, démolir ses autels, raser ses sanctuaires. Le plus acharnés à cette 'guerre de Titans', pour nous servir de l'expression pittoresque d'Eunape, c'étaient les moines. Les païens étaient impuissants, la plupart du temps, à empêcher leurs déprédations, et ils pouvaient s'estimer 'bien heureux de ne pas souffrir pis' (Libanius, *Pro templis*, 11). En Orient, les défenseurs les plus ardents du paganisme étaient les sophistes; leurs discours y charmaient toujours des populations intelligentes, mais turbulents. Antioche affectionnait particulièrment leur éloquence', Van Loy, *Pro Templis*, 7.

276 For more details on this point, cf. Petit, *Libanius*, 191-216.

instead of our mild and human laws, and would in other respects be inferior to us, yet you would be more holy and purer than now in your forms of worship. But now it has come to pass that like leeches you have sucked the worst blood from that source and left the purer. Yet Jesus, who won over the least worthy of you, has been known by name for but little more than three hundred years; and during his lifetime he accomplished nothing worth hearing of, unless anyone thinks that to heal crooked and blind men and to exorcise those who were possessed by evil demons in the village of Bethsaida and Bethany can be classed as a mighty achievement. As for purity of life you do know whether he so much as mentioned it; but you emulate the rages and the bitterness of the Jews, overturning temples and altars, and you slaughtered not only those of us who remained true to the teachings of their fathers, but also men who were as much stray as yourselves, heretics because they did not wail over the corpse[277] *in the me fashion as yourselves. But these are rather your own doings; for nowhere lid either Jesus or Paul hand down to you such commands. The reason for this is that they never even hoped that you would one day attain to such power as you have; for they were content if they could delude maidservants and slaves, and through them the women, and men like Cornelius and Sergius. But if you can show me that one of these men is mentioned by the well-known writers of that time,--these events hapened in the reign of Tiberius or Claudius,--then you may consider that I speak falsely about all matters'.*[278]

Julian further accuses the Christians of continually adding new martyrs or 'corpses' to their first martyr, Jesus Christ: *You keep adding many corpses newly dead to the corpse of long ago. You have filled the whole world with tombs and sepulchres, and yet in your scriptures it is nowhere said that you must grovel among tombs and pay them honour. But you have gone so far in iniquity that you think you need not listen even to the words of Jesus of Nazareth on this matter. Listen then to what he says about sepulchres: 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like until whited sepulchres; outwardly the tomb appears beautiful, but within it is full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness'.*[279] *If, then, Jesus said that sepulchres are full of uncleanness, how can you invoke God at them? Therefore, since this is so, why do you grovel among tombs? Do you wish to hear the reason? It is not I* (Julian the emperor) *who will tell you, but the prophet Isaiah: 'They lodge among tombs and in caves for the sake of dream visions.'*[280] *You observe, then, how ancient among the Jews was this work of witchcraft, namely, sleeping among tombs for the sake of dream visions. And indeed, it is likely that your apostles, after their teacher's*

277 i.e., the corpse of Christ; more specifically, the ceremony of Christ's funeral on Holy Friday.
278 Julian, *Against the Galileans*, 201-206; tr. 375-377.
279 *Mt.* 23, 27.
280 *Is.* 65, 4.

death, practised this and handed it down to you from the beginning, I mean to those who first adopted your faith, and that they themselves performed their spells more skilfully than you do, and displayed openly to those who came after them the places in which they performed this witchcraft and abomination.[281]

The link between martyrs and monks is obvious in Theodoret, who confirms that, in his time, the cult of the martyrs was much propagated among Syrian Christians, for whom it replaced the pagan gods. For this reason the pagans mocked the Christians and the Christian martyrs.[282] It was in response to such pagan derision that Theodoret wrote his chapter on the 'Cult of the Martyrs'. In this work he shows how the pagan gods were corrupt and argues that the Christians have exchanged pagan gods for the cult of the martyrs. In his view martyrs are products of an entirely different faith and philosophy.[283]

4. ATTACKS AGAINST THE HERMITS.

As a preface to the following discussion of the martyrdom of hermits o should note that hermits were attacked by non-Christians. Theodoret, fo example, relates a story about Zeno, who miraculously escaped an attack, though many other ascetics were captured: *Although he had no bars and used no bolts, he was, however, protected by grace from on high; and this we learnt clearly from experience itself. When a band of Isaurians captured the citadel at night,*[284] *they ran down at dawn to the foot of the mountain and cruelly shot down many men and many women who practised the ascetic life. Then this divine man, seeing the massacre of the others, obscured the vision of the Isaurians by means of prayer; passing by his door, they did not see the entrance. As he declared, calling truth to witness, he saw distinctly three youths repelling all their band, as God gave clear proof of his favor. What kind of life this divine man led and what favor he received from God, these facts suffice to demonstrate.*[285] This event recalls a similar one described in a hymn in the *Odes of Solomon:*

I thank thee, O Lord, because I love thee.

O Most High do not forsake me, because thou art my hope.

Freely I received thy grace: I shall live by it.

My persecutors will come, but will not see me:

281 Julian, *Against the Galilaeans*, 335-340, tr. III, 415-417.

282 Cf. *Thérapeutique des maladies Helléniques*, VIII, 10-12. Cf. also Eunapius, *Lives*, 472-473.

283 Cf. *Thérapeutique*, VIII, 68-70. On the substitution of the cult of the martyrs and saints for the pagan gods cf. Lucius, *Les origines du culte des saints;* Saintyves, *Le saints, successeurs des dieux*; Drijvers, *pagan cults in Christian Syria*, 36; Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 554-591.

284 Libanius, in his *Or.* XI, does not speak of the military station on Mt Silpius; Theodoret's text leads us to believe that there was such a military place. Cf. Downey, *Antioch*, 439.

285 *HR*, XII, 6; tr. 98.

A cloud of gloom will fall (upon) their eyes,
And a mist of obscurity will bring darkness upon them;
And they will not have light to see,
That they may not seize me.
Their plan will become stupidity,
And what they have plotted will come back upon their own heads;
For they have thought out a plan,
But it will not come to anything for them;
They have wickedly made preparations,
But they have been found to be in vain....[286]

Theodoret, who took some interest in such stories, tells how an ascetic girl escaped from a man who loved her when the man was struck blind: *There was a certain debauchee, formerly a general. An unmarried girl of marriageable age, who had him as master, left behind her mother and family and fled to a convent that contained a company of athletes* (ascetics)*--for there are women who compete like men and enter the racecourse of virtue. On discovering her flight, the general had the mother whipped and strung up, and did not free her from bonds till she had revealed the convent of pious women. Impelled by his own fury, he snatched the girl away from there and took her back home, hoping, the wretch, to satisfy his lechery. But He who tried Pharoah with great and grievous trials because of Sarah the wife of Abraham, and guarded her chastity unsullied*[287] *struck the eyes of this man too with blindness, and so made the quarry escape out of the midst of the nets; for as he entered the chamber, the girl, under guard within, immediately dashed out and disappeared, and made her way to her thrice-desired convent. This taught the senseless man that he would not get the better of one who had chosen the divine suitor; he was forced to remain quiet and give up hunting for one who, though captured, had escaped through the power of God.*[288] When Abraham came to preach in a village in Lebanon he was attacked by non-Christians because for trying to spread the Christian faith in their village: *Men, children, and women assembled; they walled up the doors from outside, and heaping up a great pile of earth poured it down from the roof above. But when they saw them being suffocated and buried. and willing to do or say nothing apart from addressing prayer to God, they ceased from their frenzy, at the suggestion of their elders. Then opening the doors and pulling them out from the mass of earth, they told them to depart immediately.*[289] Theodoret, however, does not record any serious persecution of

286 *Odes of Solomon*, V, 1-9 ff; tr. 693-694. Cf. *ibid.* 23, 14. 20.
287 Cf. *Gen.* 12, 17.
288 *HR*, IX, 12; tr. 86.

his hermits by non-Christians. On the contrary, he notes that, in the main, non-Christians tolerated the hermits and even showed them some respect. Of Theodosius, for example: *He was respected even by the audacious and savage enemies who plundered and enslaved most of the East* (the Isaurians).... *Nevertheless, men who spared neither city nor village, but plundered and burnt all those they could seize, showed respect to his philosophy, and after merely asking for bread and requesting prayers,*[290] *left that ascetic dwelling unharmed; and this they did not once but even twice.*[291]

According to the *Syriac life* of Symeon the Stylite, Satan incited three robbers to harm Symeon: *They came and descended from the wall at midnight, and one of them drew his sword and rushed violently against him. The other two raise their spears against him, which were bound with iron. But as that first one r violently on and came, suddenly our Lord smote him upon his face and dimn his eyes, and he swayed like a reed. And he was paralyzed and dropped dow his sword falling from his hands. Then, his mouth closed, he stood up there i that place, unable to move to either side. His companions, too, likewise continued, speechless, upon their spears, with their mouths closed.... Then he* (Symeon) *said to them, 'Go away, and do not again harm anyone, lest ye suffer worse than this'.*[292] In *Antony Life* of Symeon, a certain Julian was irritated with Symeon and tried to compel him to renounce his life on the column. Julian was punished by God and died as a result of his sufferings.[293]

289 *HR*, XVII, 2; tr. 121.

290 'Si ces Barbares n'étaient pas encore convertis, ils divinrent chrétiens vers le milieu de Vme s., quand Théodose II en 447, pendant la guerre contre les Huns, fit venir à Constantinople un contingent isaurien; un de leurs chefs, Zénon, fut nommé magister militum per Orientem et consul pour l'année 448 (Stein-Palanque, p. 298). Et l'on sait le rôle que les Isauriens joueront dans l'Empire à partir de cette date; mais quand Théodoret écrivait ce récit vers 444, il les considérait encore comme des étrangers à la culture grecque. Il s'agit ici des invasions qui s'étalérent entre 403 et 408: selon Malalas (*Chron.* p. 363,15-19), les Isauriens opéraient en effet des raids contre Séleucie de Piérie et ses environs sous le consulat de Théodose II et Flavius Rumoridus en 403; cf. Jones, *Prosopography*, p. 786; Downey, *Antioch*, p. 439'; Canivet, *Histoire* I, 445.

291 *HR*, X, 5; tr. 90-91.

292 *Syriac life*, 540; tr. 132.

293 'Un certain Julianus, lieutenant d'Ardaburius, ne cessait de l'importuner de cette demand: 'Donne-moi la permission, et je monte, je le descends de la colonne et le rassasie (de coups).' S'étant donc rendu près du saint et ayant posé une échelle contre la colonne, Julianus monta, dans la pensée qu'il allait le ramener en bas. Mais, alors qu'il était monté jusqu'au troisième degré, l'échelle s'était éloignée de la colonne, se tint suspendue au-dessus du sol à une distance d'environ quatre coudées, et elle restait suspendue en l'air. Et tous, étaient dans l'admiration à la vue de ce phénomène. Cependant, irrité, Julianus cherchait à tendre son arc dans l'intention de frapper le saint d'une flèche, mais aussitôt sa main engourdit et il ne put faire partir la flèche. Et non seulement, il fut atteint de goute dans la main, mais encore il en souffrit au pied jusqu'à mort', *Antony Life*, 27; tr. 504-505.

Malchus was captured by Arabs but this had nothing to do with his monasticism; he was taken along with a group of fellow-travellers. As he relates: *On the road from Beroa to Edessa adjoining the high-way is a waste over which the Saracens roam to and fro without having any fixed abode. Through fear of them travellers in those parts assemble in numbers, so that by mutual assistance they may escape impending danger. There were in my company men, women, old men, youths, children, altogether about seventy persons. All of a sudden the Ishmaelites on horses and camels made an assault upon us, with their flowing hair bound with fillets, their bodies half-naked, with their broad military boots, their cloaks streaming behind them, and their quivers slung up the shoulders. They carried their bows unstrung and brandished their long spears; for they had come not to fight, but to plunder. We were seized, dispersed, and carried in different directions.... We were led, or rather carried, high upon the camel's back through a desert waste, every moment expecting destruction, and suspended, I may say, rather than seated. Flesh half raw was our food, camel's milk our drink.*[294] Despite Malchus' experience the Arabs frequently attacked the Syrian monks in order to plunder their goods. In the course of such attacks monks were sometimes killed.[295] According to a *Memra* attributed to St. Ephrem, in 395 AD[296] the Huns first attacked Edessa and then went up to the mountains where they plundered the dwellings of the *Covenanters*, capturing some of them in the process.[297]

5. THE HERMITS AND THEIR MARTYRDOM: WHERE IS THE CROSS?

It is well known that, during the rise of Syrian eremitism, Christians and non-Christians were hostile to one another. Each group considered itself superior to the other and each tried to propagate its beliefs by destroying the other. It is beyond the limits of this work to examine this struggle in detail. Yet, it is worth noting that before the fourth century the Syrian Fathers utterly rejected paganism. They regarded it as a consequence of human sins, as one aspect of the

294 Jerome, *Malchus*, 316 (4).

295 It is reported that, during his eremitic life in the desert, Rabbula was attacked by Arabs who took his food and clothing; cf. Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum I*, 102ff. Devreesse, *Patriarcat d'Antioche*, 246-247, relates: 'Ceux des Arabes qui n'étaient pas encadrés dans l'armée ou assignis par les missionnaires, se livraient au brigandage: les moines de Thécué eurent à souffrir de leur part. Vers les années 410-411, on les vit même tenter une première fois--car l'essai sera renouvelé plus tard à deux reprises au moins--une manière de soulèvement général, déborder les frontières de l'Egypte à la Syrie et se répandre comme un torrent à l'intérieur du pays: saint Jérôme faillit rester entre leurs mains'. Cf. Peña, *Reclus syriens*, 86; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 165; Guillaumont, *Origines*, 164.

296 Cf. Lamy, *Hymni et Sermones*, II, 3-90. The date of this event is taken from the *Chronicle of Edessa*, cf. Guidi, *Chronica minora*, CSCO, III, 6.

297 Lamy, *Hymni et Sermones*, 73-75.

postlapsarian degradation of all humanity. Generally speaking, they viewed paganism as a negation of Christianity which had to be uprooted and replaced with the Christian faith. In the Syrian Church, this position, defined by the early Syrian Fathers, did not change very much during the fourth and fifth centuries. Most Christians, aided by the emperors of Rome, became increasingly violent towards paganism. In this respect the monks of the period acted as a sort of 'sacred militia', struggling to extirpate the indigenous and the Greek religions. It has been established that, in view of their life of mortification, the monks were considered the new martyrs of the Church and their struggle against Paganism provided a new path to martyrdom.[298] In this regard, one should make a distinction beween those monks who believed they were following the will of God and those who were simply pleasing themselves. Not every monk killed ' a non-Christian was a true martyr, nor were all those who fought agai paganism. Some monks were no more than trouble-makers, out to infla. non-Christians against Christians, to incite them to battle against Christianit, This fact is confirmed by St Jerome who accused some Syrian monks of being violent and ferocious like wild beasts.[299]

If such fanatics were killed by non-Christians as a result of their self-pleasing violence and ferocity, one must not refer to their deaths as Christian martyrdom. According to the teaching of Jesus Christ, a Christian must be peaceful and full of love towards his neighbour, whatever the latter's social and religious identity. Nor does the Christian have any right to take revenge or to work for the destruction of his enemies. Forgiveness, not destruction and hatred, is the path that leads to reconciliation. Like others who wrote histories of the monks, Theodoret selected only a few examples when describing the early monastic life of the Church. These writers chose only heroic examples to serve as representatives of the monastic movement and, according to Theodoret, these men lived peacefully alongside their non-Christian neighbours. There is almost no record of any serious attack directed against these peaceful monks and it was by means of the peaceful coexistence of monks and non-Christians that the monks were able to disseminate the Christian faith. In short, one should never commend the behaviour of the early monks uncritically, nor assume that whatever they did was done according to God's will. It is unfortunate that most of our sources concerning the monks take the Christian point of view; we have very little information from non-Christian sources. And yet, what Libanius, the emperor Julian, and even some Christian sources say about the monks allows us

298 Historians are in general agreement on the question of the monks as the new martyrs of the Christian Church, cf. Delahaye, *Origines*, 96-99; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 258; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 310, 322; Malone, 'The Monk', 210. Lucius, *Culte*, 57, 453, 537. Brock, 'Asceticism', 2.

299 Jerome, *Letter*, 17; tr. 76-77.

to conclude that many monks were not truly Christian in their behaviour towards non-Christians. The martyrdom of these monks cannot be regarded as an image of the martyrdom of Christ.[300] On the other hand, one should not forget that the history of the Church, whether in the Syrian Orient or elsewhere, is full of true martyrs who were killed simply on account of their Christianity.

E. THE SINFUL WORLD.

The eremitic life was a struggle against sin--one's own sin and the sin of the godless world. Through mortification and self-crucifixion the hermit could reach the shore of salvation and regain the former paradise with all purity and holiness.

1. THE SINFUL HERMIT

The hermit described himself as a sinner who sought to be healed from his sins through his eremitic life. Symeon the Stylite considered himself a sinner, unworthy of any regard: *I am a sinful man and least of all men, and my hands are not like those of all the rest of the bishops and monks....*[301] Peter the Galatian protested to Theodoret's mother, who considered him a holy man, by saying that he was a *man with the same nature as her and carrying a great burden of sin which deprived him of familiar access to God.*[302] According to Theodoret, one important motive in Aphrahat's choice of the eremitic life lay in the sins of his youth and the sins of his non-Christian family.[303] Theodoret also tells us that James of Cyrrhestica refused to welcome people who flocked to see him because he regarded himself as a sinner: *I did not come to the mountain for another's sake but for my own. Bearing the wounds of so many sins, I need much treatment, and because of this I beseech our Master to give me the antidotes to wickedness.*[304] Like Aphrahat and James, Thalelaeus chose the eremitic life to find healing for his sins: *Burdened with many sins and believing in the penalties that are threatened, I have devised this form of life, contriving moderate punishments for the body, in order to reduce the mass of those awaited. For the latter are more grievous not only in quantity but also in quality; for they are involuntary, and what happens against our will is particularly disagreeable, while what is voluntary, even if wearisome, is less painful--for my labor is*

300 Theodoret did not always approve of attacks made by the monks against the pagan sanctuaries. Cf. Canivet, *Entreprise apologétique*, 10f, 16f.

301 *Syriac Life*, 553; tr. 139. Cf. *ibid.* 557, 625. In the *Antony Life*, Symeon suffers and crucifies himself because he is a sinner: 'Pardonnez-moi, messieurs mes frères, laissez-moi mourir ainsi, le chien puant, car c'est à cause de mes actes que j'ai dû être condamné aussi à ce châtiment: car toute offense et cupidité sont nées avec moi, je suis l'océan des péchés'. *Antony Life*, 8; tr. 495.

302 *HR*, IX, 7; tr. 84.

303 Cf. *HR*, VIII, 1.

304 *HR*, XXI, 3; tr. 146.

self-chosen and not compulsory. So if by these slight afflictions I lessen those awaited, great is the profit I shall derive therefrom.[305] Theodoret goes on to say that Thalelaeus was aware of the main reasons for his eremitic struggle and mortification, and that he taught them to others: *Hearing this I* (Theodoret) *was overwhelmed with admiration for his shrewdness, because he not only contended beyond the course laid down and devised other contests of his own will, but also knew the reason for them and taught it to others.*[306] The fight against sin was one of the main concerns of the hermits. John the Solitary,[307] Abraham Qidunaya,[308] and Julian Saba,[309] all confirm what the hermits of the *Historia Religiosa* said above.

There is a striking parallel between the conception of the sinner in the ea Syrian tradition and the sinner in subsequent Syrian eremitic circles; relationship between these two traditions is very strong. Theophilus of Antio says that although the result of sin is human expulsion from fellowship wit God, the expulsion was ordered by God to bring about our repentence and salvation: *So also the first-formed man, his disobedience resulted in his expulsion from paradise. It was not that the tree of knowledge contained anything evil, but that through disobedience man acquired pain, suffering, and sorrow, and finally fell victim to death. And in so doing God conferred a great benefit upon man. He did not let him remain for ever in a state of sin, but, so to speak, with a kind of banishment he cast him out of Paradise, so that by this punishment he might expiate his sin in a fixed period of time and after chastisement might later be recalled....*[310] The *Didascalia* takes a similar view of the sinner, who must be separated from the Christian community and placed under the direct care of the bishop: *For we do not believe, brethren, when (once) a man has gone into the water that he will do again the abominable and defiled works of the wicked heathen. For it is manifest and known to everyone that whosoever does evil after baptism, the same is already condemned to the Gehenna of fire... If he who sins shall see that the bishop and the deacons are free from rebuke and the entire flock pure, first of all he will not dare to enter the congregation, because he will be reproved by his conscience... When he is gone out, he will repent of his sin and weep and groan before God and there shall be hope for him. But again the entire flock itself also, when it sees the weeping and tears of that one, will fear, knowing and understanding that everyone who sins perishes.*[311] The *Didascalia* goes on to say: *To Miriam the*

305 *HR*, XXVIII, 4; tr. 181.
306 *HR*, XXVIII, 4; tr. 181.
307 Strothmann, *Johannes von Apamea, Syr.*, 40-42ff., 61-62, 100.
308 *Abraham Qidunaya*, 9, 13, 19, 22, 26, 34. See also *Liber Graduum*, 249ff, 692ff.
309 *Julian Saba*, 58, 60, 78, 83.
310 Theophilus of Antioch, II, 25-26ff; tr. 69ff.

sister of Moses also, when she had spoken against Moses and afterwards repented and was esteemed worthy of forgiveness, it was said by the Lord: 'If her father had but spit in her face, it were right for her to be ashamed, and to be separated seven days without the camp, and then to come in.'[312] *Likewise it also is required of you* (the bishop) *to do: to put out of the Church those who promise to repent of their sins as is right for their transgressions--and afterwards receive them as a merciful father.*[313] The requirements for purification were the same for the ordinary sinner and the sinner hermit. A sinful man should first absent himself from the flock of God; he should then practice fasting, vigil, silence, self-crucifixion, prayer, etc., in order to become once more a pure and holy son of God. Thus, it is clear that hermits were not driven from the Christian congregation, nor obliged to join the eremitic life, nor forced into the desert to purify themselves of their sins; rather, they adopted the eremitic life willingly, and freely took on the way of self-crucifixion for the sake of Christian purity and holiness. In my opinion, the Syrian hermits, who were deeply rooted in the spirituality of the Syrian Church, were fully aware of their sinful state according to the beliefs of the Church. Their eremitism was a response to the Church's prescriptions for the purification of sinners. They chose the desert as the place where they could remain separate from the Christian community and where they could seek to heal their sins outside the pure flock of Christ.

2. PASSIONS

A hermit believed that the Evil One could only invade his inner peace through his senses. Consequently, any evil thoughts deeply disturbed his sense of harmony with God.[314] Human nature, however, is full of passions and desires and, in order to be at peace, the hermit had to strive to subdue troublesome emotions.[315] Julian Saba considered arrogance and vanity as passions which had to be uprooted from human nature;[316] accordingly he practised *impassibility*[317] *in a mortal nature and awaiting the immortality of the body.*[318] The hermits

311 *Didascalia*, 60-62; tr. 51-52. Cf. *ibid.* 85-87.

312 *Num.* 12, 14.

313 *Didascalia*, 73; also *ibid.* 60-62, 72-73, 82, 85-87, 92, 117.

314 Cf. Theodoret, *HR, Prol.* 6.

315 Cf. Theodoret, *HR, Prol.* 5.

316 Cf. *HR*, II, 6 and compare it with III, 9.

317 In the Syrian tradition the term 'impassibility' was first used by Ignatius of Antioch: 'There is one Physician, who is both flesh and spirit, born and yet not born, who is God in man, true life in death, both of Mary and of God, first passible and then impassible, Jesus Christ our Lord', *Eph.* VII, 2. The word belongs mainly to the Greek-speaking Christian tradition and seems to be absent from the Syriac-speaking tradition before the middle of the fifth century. Theodoret used it twice (cf. *HR, Prol.* 2; II, 22), but in his comments on impassibility he does not seem to be thinking of the Evagrian meaning of this word, cf. Canivet, *Monachisme syrien*, 269-272.

318 *HR*, II, 22; tr. 34.

were like every human being, full of passions and desires, and without their self-control, they become slaves of anger, vanity, and all the arts of the Evil One.[319] Yet, the *burden of the passions* can only shed at the time of death.[320] John the Solitary defines passions in this way: *The passions of the body are as follows: the mouth's sense of taste, service of the belly, natural desire, the dissipation of pleasure and fornication, the laxity of sleep, and so forth. The passions of the intellect are: ignorance, forgetfulness, conceit, and unbelief.*[321] According to John, the passions are the cause of our sufferings and illnesses: *The passions are afflictions, for because a man is not free from the passions, the pains, illnesses and chastisements that are common to men befall him.*[322] The ascetic struggle of Abraham Qidunaya and Julian Saba was regarded coextensive with their lusts and earthly passions.[323]

3. SLLEEPING

For the hermits sleeping and darkness were closely related. Those wi struggled to resist sleep did so to avoid becoming sons of darkness, ensnared by the world of sin. It was thought that demons used the time of sleep to tempt the hermits, and so to destroy spiritual purity by filling the mind with evil thoughts and prompting the sleeper to commit evil deeds.[324] According to Ephrem, God-fearing people sleep little, while sinners, who are lazy and subject to their earthly passions, sleep a lot.[325] When examining the eremitic life one frequently encounters tales concerning the demon who attempted to lay snares for a hermit during the night: *He* (James) *related too how, at the time when those wicked brigands coming from Isauria burnt and plundered most of the east, he was terrified at the thought, not of being killed--he was not so in love with the body--but of enslavement and captivity and witnessing piety and lawlessness. The devil, perceiving this fear--for he often heard him express it to his friends--imitated by night the wailing of women. 'I thought I could hear,' he continued, 'the enemy arriving and setting fire to the villages. I at once parted the hair on my head, drawing some on the left and some on the right down my shoulders to my chest, and made my neck ready to be severed by the sword, so that receiving the blow immediately, I might be spared the sight I deprecated. When day came and some people arrived, after spending the whole night like this, all the time expecting an assault, I asked what they had heard of the*

319 Cf. Theodoret, *Thérap.* III, 94; *HR*, IV, 7. 11.

320 Cf. *HR*, VIII, 15.

321 John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 462.

322 John the Solitary, *On stillness*, 464.

323 *Abraham Kidunaya*, III, 20; IV, 24; X, 24. *Julian Saba*, II, 4; VI, 23; XXI, 2; XXIII, 3ff.

324 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 96; *Ephrem*, 99.

325 I refer to Ephrem in Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 264, because the original was not available to me.

Isaurians. They replied that during these days they had heard nothing of them. That (he concluded) was how I discovered that this too was a diabolical illusion.[326] James relates another similar story: *After this again he* (James continued) *I was praying by night, when the noise of a carriage reached me, as also the cry of a driver and of horses whinneying. The novelty of the thing bewildered me, for I reflected that no governor was staying in the city at that time, that the road was not for carriages, and that the time of day was not suitable for carriages. As I was having these thoughts, there was heard a tumult of great company approaching and the cries of the rod-bearers in front, hissing to clear the crowd out of the way and make the road ready for the governor. When they seemed to me to be extremely close (he continued), I said, 'Who are you? Where have you come from? for what purpose have you come at this time? How long will you keep up your jesting, you wretch, and presume upon the divine forbearance?' This I said as, facing east, I addressed petition to God. The other gave me a push, but had not the strength to knock me down--for divine grace resisted--, and immediately the whole apparition vanished.*[327] The *Liber Graduum* comments on Christ's vigil before his sufferings and the disciples' failure to keep watch:[328] *and sin contended in that night against the disciples.*[329] For sleeping is a quality of sinners who dwell in the darkness of their behaviour.[330] For the unrepentant sinner, that is, only the conscience can sleep, and the man who likes sleep is polluted by his sins. Similarly, in eremitism 'night' was considered as a synonym of 'evil' and 'darkness,' and so as an anti-power to God.[331]

The identification of sleep and night with evil and the sinful world is found in the early Syrian tradition in general. In the *Acts of Thomas* the darkness of night is regarded as the darkness of those evildoers who capture Christians and imprison them: *'Thine now is the speed (to help us), Jesus our Illuminator, for lo, the children of darkness have made us sit in their darkness; but do Thou, our Lord enlighten us with the light of Thy nature'. And instantly the whole prison was bright as by day; and all those who were shut up there were asleep, and only those who believed in our Lord were awake.*[332] The *Didascalia* advises the bishop to take care of sinners lest they 'fall asleep': *And that which is lost, seek out: that is him who through the multitude of his offenses has lost his hope and abandoned himself to destruction, leave not to perish altogether, lest through*

326 *HR*, XXI, 27; tr. 143-144.
327 *HR*, 26; tr. 143.
328 Cf. *Lk.* 22, 41ff.
329 *Liber Graduum*, 549, 16-17.
330 Cf. *Liber Graduum*, 813, 2-6; 833, 7-17.
331 Cf. Macarius, *Homilies*, II, 1; IV,1; V; IX, 12; XV, 21; XXVIII, 4.
332 *Acts of Thomas*, 153; tr. 147.

utter neglect or much carelessness he shall fall asleep, and because of the weight of his sleep shall forget his life, and will abide afar and remove (himself) from his congregation, that is from the Church, and he shall (end) in perdition....[333] This text recalls some verses from the 'Hymn of the Soul' in the *Acts of Thomas*. They relate how Thomas's sins caused him to fall into a deep sleep after he left his 'family', here a symbol of the Church:

And when I was single and was alone
(and) became strange to my family...
I forgot that I was a son of Kings,
and I served their king;
and I forgot the pearl,
for which my parents had sent me,
and because of the burden of their oppressions
I lay in a deep sleep.
But all these things that befell me
my parents perceived, and were grieved for me....
and they wrote me a letter....
From thy Father, the king of kings...
to thee, our son...
Up and arise from thy sleep...
See the slavery, who thou servest!
Remember the pearl....[334]

Similarly, the *Didascalia* accuses Christians of being lazy, idle, and asleep: *How long will you sleep, you sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?...*[335]

4. FORNICATION AND SEXUALITY

With the fall of Adam and Eve humanity became corrupted. Worldly, lustful desires contaminated the behaviour the sexes towards each other. Thus, the hermits, who conceived of themselves as still tainted with the sin of Adam, wished to purify themselves of all lustful thoughts and desires. Accordingly, they broke off direct relations with the opposite sex and strict rules were imposed on them to prevent any contact between men and women. Julian Saba, for example, *had been segregated from the sight of women for more than forty years,*[336] *and Marianus did not consent to see his sister.*[337] Symeon the Stylite

333 *Didascalia*, 82; tr. 76-77.
334 *Acts of Thomas*, 109-110; tr. 121-122.
335 *Didascalia*, 154; tr. 140. See also *ibid.* 160.

would not see his mother face to face, even when he knew she was about to die.[338] It is related in the *Syriac Life* of Symeon that a demon appeared to him in the likeness of a beautiful woman: *That abominable one, the doer of evil deeds and lover of wickedness, appeared to the holy one at midday as he stood praying, in the likeness of a beautiful woman who was clothed with garments of gold and adorned with beautiful things, and she merrily laughed and came towards him. When the Saint saw her, he crossed himself, and turning breathed on her in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and immediately she became like a beast whose hands and feet were cut off, and wallowing in howling retreat as though many were pursuing her, until she reached a corner of the cell, she anished like smoke.*[339]

James of Cyrrhestica experienced a similar temptaion: *After a few days had assed, he* (James) *continued) when at midday I was performing the customary iturgy, I saw two women coming down from the mountain. When in vexation at this unusual occurrence I tried to throw stones at them, I recalled the threat of the avenging spirit and guessed this to be the evil reputation. So I shouted that even if they sat on my shoulders I would not throw stones at them or chase them away, but have recourse to prayer alone. When I said this, they vanished, and the visual illusion ended as I spoke.*[340] Jacob of Nisibis punished some girls for staring at him immodestly: *As he* (James) *was passing by a spring, some girls who were standing at washing-troughs and cleaning clothes under their feet, far from feeling awe at his novel appearance, cast aside all modesty and stared at*

336 *HR*, II, 17; tr; 32.

337 *HR*, III, 14; tr. 43.

338 'Écoutez un miracle effrayant, extraordinaire. Au bout de vingt années la mère de saint Syméon apprend où il est, et, étant venue en vitesse, elle voulut le voir après tant d'années; elle pleurait à chaudes larmes pour le voir, et il ne lui fut pas permis de le contempler. Comme elle désirait grandement être bénie par ses saintes mains, elle fut forcée de monter à l'échelle sur le mur: or, comme elle montait à l'échelle sur le mur de la mandra, elle fut précipitée à terre, sans avoir pu voir Syméon. Alors le saint Syméon lui faire dire: 'Pardonne-moi, mère, pour l'instant; si nous en sommes dignes, nous nous reverrons l'un l'autre dans ce monde même.' Ayant ouï ces mots, sa mère brûlait plus encore de le voir. Alors le saint Syméon lui fait dire: 'Calme-toi, Madame ma mère. Puisque tu es venue de loin et que tu t'es fatiguée à cause de moi le misérable, eh bien, assieds-toi un peu, repose-toi et prends de la force. Après un peu de temps je te verrai.' A ces mots sa mère s'assoit dans le vestibule de l'enclos et aussitôt elle rendit le souffle à Dieu. Les guardiens du lieu vinrent pour la réveiller: mais ils la trouvèrent morte et annoncèrent la chose au saint. A ces mots il ordonne qu'on l'apporte à l'intérieur, il la fait placer devant sa colonne et, l'ayant regardée en pleurant... Tandis qu'il priait, la sainte dépouille de sa mère fut prise de mouvement, un sourire apparut sur son visage, et tous les spectateurs étaient frappés de stupeur et glorifiaient Dieu. Ils lui rendirent les devoirs funèbre et l'enterrèrent devant la colonne de Syméon, pour qu'il se souvînt d'elle en ses prières', *Antony Life*, 14; tr. 497-498.

339 *Syriac Life*, 537; tr 130.

340 *HR*, XXI, 25; tr. 143.

the man of God with brazen looks and eyes dead to shame. They did not cover their heads, nor even let down their clothes, which they had tucked up. Indignant at this, the man of God decided to display God's power opportunely, in order to free them from impiety by means of a miracle. So he cursed the spring, at which the stream immediately vanished away; and then he cursed the girls, and chastised their impudent youth with pemature grey hair. His words had immediate effect: their black hair was changed, and they looked like young trees decked in spring with the leaves of autumn. As the water of the spring ran away, and looking at each other's heads they saw that drastic alteration, they perceived their punishment, and ran into the town to tell what had happened. this the townsfolk rushed out to meet the great James, and begged him to ca his anger and remit the punishment. Without a moment's delay he ma supplication to the Master and bade the water gush forth once more immediately it appeared again out of its underground sources, recovering its course at the command of the righteous one. After receiving this favor, they begged him to restore to their daughters' hair its former color. It is said that he consented to this as well and asked for the girls who had received that correction, but when they did not appear he let the punishment stand, as a lesson in self-control, a reason for good behavior, and a perpetual and clear reminder of the power of God.[341] In the life of Marianus, Theodoret relates how a monk answered a lady who came to see the superior of his community: *it was not the custom for the superior to speak with women.*[342] This custom seems to apply to every hermit, for Aphrahat agreed to speak to women but only if they were outside his door: *The woman told this standing in front of the outer door--for he* (Aphrahat) *was not accustomed to make conversation with the female sex, and never admitted any woman inside the door.*[343] Abraham Qidunaya would only speak to his niece, Mary, through a small window while instructing her in the ascetic life: *There was a small window which communicated between them, and it was through it that he gave the girl instruction in the psalms and the holy scriptures.*[344]

341 *HR*, I, 4; tr. 13-14. Brown, *Society and the Holy*, 122, comments on this event: 'The Syrians were notable cursers. We begin the *Historia Religiosa* with Jacob of Nisibis. He cursed laundry girls, so that their long tresses floated down the river like autumn leaves. He cursed a Persian judge who had given an unjust judgment, so that a boulder exploded beside him (*HR*, I, 6). From the toppling walls of Nisibis, he cursed the army of the King of Kings himself, (*HR*, I, 11). Yet, in the majority of cases, the exercise of the curse points backwards to the position of the holy man as an arbitrator and mediator. The vengeance of God falls only on the man whose case the holy man has rejected....'. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 120, seems to agree with Brown. Peeters, *La légende de S. Jacques*, 292-293 notes the similarity of this story to one in the *Syriac Life* of Ephrem.

342 *HR*, III, 22; tr. 46.

343 *HR*, VIII, 13; tr. 78.

344 Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women*, 29.

The rule of speaking only to members of one's own sex spread among men and women throughout the Syrian eremitic life.[345] The *Liber Graduum* takes the same eremitic view of the worldly behaviour of the sexes.[346] A text attributed to Ephrem says that *the sight of a woman inflames bodily desires.*[347] Rabbula began his precepts for the monks by warning them against women: *Before all things the monks must take care that women never enter their monasteries.*[348] He continues: *No one of the monks shall distribute (lit. make) oil, and especially to women; however, if there is one who evidently has the charisma, he shall give oil to men; and when there are women who are in want, it shall be sent to them through their husbands.*[349]

Rabbula gives similar rules for the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Qyama* and the clergy:

--No one of the periodeutae or priests or deacons or benai qeiama shall live with women--except with his mother or sister or daughter--and they shall not make households for these (women) outside their own (dwelling-places) and be constantly with them[350].

--The priests and deacons shall not be served by women and particularly not by the benat qeiama,[351]

Restrictions were imposed on monks and nuns because of the many incidents which occurred between hermits and members of the opposite sex. For example, an ex-monk had fallen in love with Mary, the niece of Abraham Qidunaya: *Now there was a man who was nominally a monk who used regularly to come and visit the blessed Abraham on the pretext of friendship. One day he happened to see the blessed girl through the window. He fell in love with her at the mere sight and wanted to get hold of her and sleep with her. He allowed his mad desire for her to burn like a flame of fire in his heart. For a whole year he treacherously laid wait for her, until he succeeded in softening her firm resolve, and the girl eventually opened the door of the house where she lived as a recluse and came out to see him. He assaulted her with his blandishments, bespattering her with the mud of his lust.*[352] At this point Mary became terribly aware of her sinfulness and went to live in another country. There she behaved like a tavern-prostitute until Abraham discovered her and brought her back to the eremitic life.[345] In Rabbula's rules for the *Qyama* there is a strict law against those who try to marry an ascetic who has been consecrated to God: *They shall anathematize, bind and send to the town for judgement the layman who dares to take a bart qeiama (as a wife); if she, too, became corrupted by her consent, they shall send her, too.*[346]

345 Cf. Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women*, 30-36.
346 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 43 (28).

The hermits took this view of the opposite sex from the earlier Syrian tradition, which had already adopted a strict attitude to sexual behaviour. Theophilus of Antioch summarized the spiritual position of the Syrian Church: *The maleficent demon, also called Satan, who then spoke to Eve through the serpent and is still at work in those men who are possessed by him, addressed her as 'Eve'*[347] *because she was at first deceived by the serpent and became the pioneer of sin.*[348] The *Didascalia* also warns Christians about this corrupted Eve: *A woman who lacks conscience and is vain-glorious is in need of bread, and knows no shame. For she sits in the street, by the door of her house, upon a high chair, and calls to the passers by the way, and to them who walk in h path, and says: Whoever among you is a stupid one, let him come near to r and to him who lacks conscience I will say: Approach affectionately the hid bread and stolen waters that are sweet. And he knows not that heroes per. through her, and reach the depth of Sheol.*[349]

The *Didascalia* takes a similar attitude to corrupted Adam: *Do not adorn (yourself) so that a strange woman may see you and covet you. And if, indeed, you be constrained by her and sin with her, death in fire shall come upon you from God severely, that (death) which abides forever which is in rough and bitter fire; and you shall know and understand when you are severely tortured.*[350] Further: *However, if a man should corrupt and defile a strange wife after baptism, or be polluted with a harlot and rising up from her should wash in all the seas and bottomless pits and be bathed in all the rivers, he cannot be made clean.*[351] It is obvious from the above examples that men, whether hermits or laymen, were regarded as sexually vulnerable to women. A man's attempt to satisfy his sexual desires or, by contrast, to protect himself from unwanted sexual urges might lead him to violence. Women, on the other hand, were the victims of male aggression and became scapegoats for uncontrolled masculine passions.

347 'Theophilus is trying to identify the name 'Eve' with the Bacchie cry 'Euan'', Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch*, 73.

348 Theophilus of Antioch, II, 28; tr. 73.

349 *Didascalia*, III, 25; tr. 25.

350 *Didascalia*, II, 14-15; tr. 12.

351 *Didascalia*, XXVI, 263; tr. 245.

5. COVETOUSNESS--POSSESSION AND SELF-LOVE

The eremitic life did not necessarily permit the hermit to give his own life for the sake of Christ. Such an attitude could lead to laziness and selfishness. This happened to Alexander while he was living as a hermit in Mesopotamia.[360] Ammianus warned Eusebius of Teleda of the danger threatening hermits who live a life of complete silence: *Restricting all one's care to oneself would not escape... the charge of self-love...*[361] In a passage already quoted Libanius described the monks of Syria as greedy and covetous.[362] The possession of material goods and resources, however, was a deviation on the part of particular hermits. Strict rules were imposed on monks to prevent any involvement with money or commerce: *There shall be no business-affairs of buying and selling in he monasteries, except only for that (thing) which is sufficient for their needs, vithout greediness.*[363] Rabbula adds: *If one shall sell the crop for the benefit of the monastery, he shall not take something more, except (the price) as it sells at the time of that threshing-season, so he shall sell, so that he would not covet on behalf of the monastery.*[364] Of all the monks, Alexander Akoimetos was most hostile to economic affairs. He accused the monks of corruption because they occupied themselves with their material needs. In this respect, the Syrian hermits were no different from other Christians; they carried in themselves the fragility and corruption of the Christian who does not follow Christ's example completely. During the early centuries all Syrian sources warn Christians against covetousness, the possession of material goods, and self-love. They severely admonish those who were corrupted: *Whoever lends and takes usury and is occupied in merchandise and covetousness shall not serve again and shall not remain in the ministry.*[365]

6. HERESIES

Not all hermits held the orthodox position of the Church. When he stayed among the Syrian monks in the desert of Chalcis, for example, St. Jerome suffered an aggressive investigation of his orthodoxy. Some Syrian ascetics appear to have spent much of their time fighting each other rather than pursuing their vocation of silence and contemplation. Hence, when Jerome addresses Mark, a priest at Chalcis, concerning the hermits there: *And now, first of all, before I speak to you about my faith which you know very well, I am obliged to cry out against the barbarism of that place of yours, using the familiar lines:*

360 Cf. Stoop, *Alexander*, 9.
361 *HR*, IV, 4; tr. 50.
362 Libanius, *Oration*, XXX, 8; tr. 107-109.
363 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 29 (11).
364 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 25; tr. 33.
365 *Didascalia*, III, 45; tr. I, 39; cf. *ibid.* 34; 133; 163; 27-28; 47; 54-55. Cf. *Didache*, 2, 5; 3, 5; 11, 6; 12, 5, 1; 15, 1.

'What race of men is this? Or what land permits so barbarous a custom? We are kept from the hospitality of the shore. They start a war and forbid us to land on the coast,' etc. It is on this account that we have borrowed these words from the pagan poet, that he who does not keep Christ's peace may at least learn peace from a heathen. I am called a heretic for preaching that the Trinity is consubstantial. I am accused of the Sabellian heresy for proclaiming with unwearied voice that there are three subsistent persons, true, undiminished, and perfect. If I am accused by Arians, it is deserved. If by the orthodox, who criticize a faith of this kind, they have ceased to be orthodox. Or, if they pleas let them condemn me as a heretic with the West, a heretic with Egypt, that is say, with Damasus and Peter. Why do they condemn one man, passing over associates? If a brook flows with a slight stream, that is not the fault of its be but of its source. I am ashamed to say it: out of the caves of our cells we condemn the world if, while wallowing in sackcloth and ashes, we pass judgment on bishops. Why this regal attitude under a garb of penitence? A chain and squalid hair are evidence, not of a diadem, but of weeping.... Not one corner of the desert is granted me. Daily I am asked my faith as though I had been born again without faith. I make confession as they wish: it does not please them. I sign their formula: they do not believe me. There is only one thing that does please them: that I should leave this place. Soon, soon I shall leave. They have taken from me part of my very soul: my dearest brothers. Lo, they are eager to depart--nay, they are departing, saying it is better to dwell amid wild beasts than with such Christians.[366] Sozomen also says that heresy was widespread among certain monks of the Syrian Orient: *in addition to the causes mentioned, especially to the monks of that period; or all those philosophers* (the monks) *in Syria, Cappadocia, and the neighboring provinces, were sincerely attached to the Nicene faith. The eastern regions, however, from Cilicia to Phoenicia, were endangered by the heresy of Apollinarius. The heresy of Eunomius was spread from Cilicia and the mountains of Taurus as far as the Hellespont and Constantinople....*[367]

In the early history of the Syrian Church monks were involved in dogmatic struggles. Unfortunately, documentary evidence of this subject before Chalcedon belongs exclusively to the so-called 'orthodox monks'. Those who recorded the lives of the early Syrian monks were mainly orthodox and they only mention monks of their own persuasion. The rules of Rabbula, however, demonstrate clearly that the so-called 'heretic monks' were numerous in the Syrian monasteries. Their presence necessitated strict rules, imposed in an attempt to

366 Jerome, *Letter*, 17; tr. 76-77.
367 Eusebius, *HE*, VI/26; tr. 364.

expel them from the communities of orthodox monks, and from Christian society in general:

-- The sons of the Church shall have no intercourse with the heretics, neither in word nor in deed.

-- Do not permit anyone of the heretics to dwell in the monastery; and any of the heretics who come to the Church and are divided in their mind, shall not receive the Eucharist.

-- The books of the heretics and their book cases (receptacles) search out in every place, and wherever you can, either bring (them) to us or burn (them) in the fire.

-- Do not accept heretics for baptism without distinction (examination), but hey shall show proof and then they shall be received.[368]

Though the Church's attitude towards the 'heretic monks' is clear, to define the extent of its application requires careful consideration. Alexander Akoimetos, for instance, was considered a heretic by the Church authorities in Constantinople due to the persuasive power of his preaching. He emptied the monasteries and churches because people wanted to follow his ascetic teachings instead of the precepts of their bishops, priests, and abbots. Alexander's biographer reports that demons incited people to attack Alexander and his disciples: *His ministry was well performed, with God's help; his disciples were growing in faith and they rejoiced in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and lived in peace: but the enemy could not bear to see this, and came against the noble athlete like a hostile array.... it was reported to the prefects that the monk Alexander was a heretic and wanted to destroy the Church of God. The blessed one held out bravely through prayers; as the saying goes, they could not resist even his shadow. For it is in the nature of falsehood to be overpowered by truth. Yet if I must speak the truth where there is uncertainty, justice was rocked by storms. The blessed Alexander appeared, outwardly unarmed yet adorned with prudence, with the mass of the people stirred up against him by the devil. But the servant of God applied to himself the words of the Holy Scriptures: 'Even though princes sit plotting against me, Thy servant will meditate on Thy statutes. Thy testimonies are my delight, they are my counsellors. I cleave to Thy testimonies, O Lord; let me not be put to shame!'*[369] *Then the enemy of truth stood before him and cried out, 'Why do you punish me before my time, servant of God? I have my own Master and Judge'. So the appointed judges, failing to reach a just verdict, justified him before the great Judge. They did this so that once he was dismissed, he would be lynched by the people and the defenders of*

368 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 48 (48-51).
369 *Ps.* 118, 23-24.

the devil. But trusting in God's protection, he made his way through the midst of them. For the awe of the Lord fell upon them, and their resolve crumbled. The holy brothers were praying to God for him, and the same thing happened here as happened with the holy apostles. For in both cases, God was working with them. Once this war had abated by the power of Christ, the enemy of truth did not rest, but did everything and devised every scheme to put a stop to the ceaseless hymnody, because it was directed against him. So he devised a way that he would be able to destroy it at last, so he thought. Knowing that countries and cities are often betrayed by their own people, he therefore attacked the blesse one in this way, and called his compatriots into an alliance, to carry them alc with him. And they seized the blessed Alexander with his holy brothers bound them, and inflicted deadly wounds upon them. Then they did stop t ceaseless hymnody for a few days, and truly there was mourning among . brothers and among the holy Powers. For the former shepherds of those sam brothers were ordered each to take back his own monks. The servant of God Alexander was sent away alone, so they thought: but he was not alone, because he had Christ with him. Once he had been sent away, the brothers all gathered together with one accord as if at a trumpet call. And the service of God and the same rule was reestablished the same day, as if nothing had happened to the monks - such was their disposition. Or rather, they rejoiced as if they had found a spiritual treasure.[370]

St. Jerome's letter, referred to above, helps to clear up many doubts about heresy and orthodoxy among the Syrian monks. In spite of his orthodoxy, Jerome was condemned by the 'orthodox monks' who accused him, falsely, of Sabellianism. In the midst of this restless atmosphere, Jerome commented: *it is better to dwell amid wild beasts than with such Christians.*[371] The letter also says that many Syrian monks were less than honest in their accusations of heresy. Jerome's example, moreover, was not unique. As he makes clear, many others, including bishops, were similarly condemned: *I am ashamed to say it: out of the caves of our (hermits') cells we condemn the world if, while wallowing in sackcloth and ashes, we pass judgment on bishops.*[372] The condemnation of the world in general is not a tenet of orthodoxy and, as St Jerome says of the monks of Chalcis, those who held such extreme views placed themselves in an unorthodox position: *If (I am accused) by the orthodox, who criticize a faith of this kind, they have ceased to be orthdox.*[373] Confusion between orthodoxy and heresy, however, does not prevent one from discriminating between the two. On many occasions the Syrian Church felt compelled to expel heretical ascetic

370 Stoop, *Alexander*, 48-51.
371 Jerome, *Letter*, 17; tr. 76-77.
372 Jerome, *Letter*, 17; tr. 76-77.
373 Jerome, *Letter*, 17; tr. 76-77.

movements from its monastic community. For example, the heretical and violent behavior of some Syrian monastic communities, documented in the descriptions of Libanius quoted above, is rooted in the early Syrian tradition. Significantly, in Theophilus of Antioch's important description of heretics, the Syrians' behaviour is similar to that described by Libanius: *And as, again, there are other islands which are rocky and waterless and barren, full of wild beasts and uninhabitable, harmful to those who sail and are tossed by storms, islands on which ships are impaled and those who land perish, so also are the teachings of error-I mean of the heresies--which destroy those who approach them. For they are not guided by the word of truth, but just as pirates, when they have filled ·hips, run them on the places mentioned above, in order to destroy them, so it appens that those who stray from the truth are destroyed by error.*[374] One can ardly doubt that this passage could have applied just as well to the lives of corrupt monks living in the desert.

7. ANIMALS

Animals occupied an important place in early Syrian theology. Some of them formed part of the sinful world and Syrian asceticism used certain animals as symbols of sin and evil. In themselves, animals were seen as good. Because of their irrational state, however, it was believed that they could be used as the vehicles of demonic forces: *they* (demons) *caused harm to many passing by or of the neighborhood, not only men but also asses and mules, oxen and sheep, not making war on irrational animals but by means of them plotting against men.*[375]

a. Dragon

On another occasion, when the great Marcianus was praying in the forecourt, a dragon[376] *crawled up onto the wall facing east, and leant down from the wall gaping and looking grim at the same time, displaying his intention. Standing at a distance, Eusebius, frightened at this terrifying sight and presuming his master did not know of it, indicated it by crying out and begging him to flee. But he rebuked him and told him to cast off his cowardice, saying that this too is a destructive passion, and he made the sign of the cross with his finger and blew with his mouth, intimating the ancient enmity. The dragon, withered and, so to speak, burnt by the breath of his mouth as if by some fire, was dissolved into many fragments like straw that is set ablaze.*[377] Like many others in the history of Syrian asceticism, this tale belongs to the world of symbolism; here the dragon symbolizes an evil and destructive passion or desire.

374 Theophilus of Antioch, II, 14; tr. 51.

375 *HR*, XXVIII, 1; tr. 180.

376 I have altered Price's translation from 'serpent' to 'dragon', in accordance with Greek usage; cf. Canivet, *Histoire* I, 257(2).

377 *HR*, III, 7; tr. 40.

Similarly, in the *Syriac life* of Symeon Stylites the dragon is identified with Satan: *Again, after ten days, as he was standing praying by night, he saw the appearance of a dragon. It was fierce, large and fearful, and changed its appearance. It hissed, and whistled violently, and lashed its tail upon the ground, and rattled and made a noise, so that the earth was moved at the sound it made, and there went out from it as it were flames of fire. Out of its nostrils went forth smoke, and its eyes flashed like lightning. Its length too was considerable. But he, the heroic one, was not daunted, but lifted up his eyes and his hands towards his Lord, and turning blew at it as he said, 'Our Lord Jesus Christ rebuke thee.' And immediately it vanished, and was not.*[378] It is well known that the dragon belongs to an archaic spiritual tradition in which it i identified with the Evil One. It represented our *destructive passions,* whi belonged to the realm of Satan and which aimed to destroy our unity wi God.[379] Thus, the struggle between the Syrian hermits and the dragon stood fo the struggle of the Syrian Church with the powers of darkness. Theophilus of Antioch understands the word 'dragon' as a designation of Satan: *He is called 'demon' and 'dragon'* [380] *becaue he escaped (apodedrakenai) from God.*[381] In the *Odes of Solomon* it is remarked that by the power of God a Christian can overthrow the dragon: *He who overthrew by my hands the seven-headed dragon, (and thou didst set me over his roots, that I might destroy his seed).*[382]

b. Snakes

In the lives of the ascetics Satan frequently appeared in the guise of a snake to alarm the people of God. Symeon the Stylite was often tempted by vipers, serpents, and other kinds of snakes because Satan wanted to divert him from his

378 *Syriac Life*, 529-530; tr. 125; cf. also *ibid.* 549.

379 'Le serpent et le dragon servaient à symboliser le démon et son empire, aussi représentait-on parfois les saints écrasant un monstre ou le frappant du bâton pastoral ou encore le trainant avec une école. Le peuple y vit le souvenir des luttes de ces saints personnages avec des dragons réels et de véritables serpents. De la naquirent une infinité d'épisodes légendaires qui transformèrent des apôtres triomphants de l'idôlatrie, des saints vainqueurs de leurs passions en saints thaumaturges et en pontifes magiciens', Saintyves, *Les Saints*, 124. Cf. Lucius, *Les origines du culte des saints*, 516.

380 Cf. *Rev.* 12,9.

381 Theophilus of Antioch, II, 28; tr. 73.

382 *Odes of Solomon*, XXII, 5; tr. 712. Bernard, *The Odes of Solomon*, 945 comments on this verse: 'The 'dragon with seven heads' is Satan, vanquished.... It is then clear that the overthrow of the dragon is a figure continually used by Christian writers to express the victory of the baptized Christian. It is the familiar 'beating down Satan under our feet'. Originally, as in *Ps.* lxxiii (lxxiv) 13, the figure reproduces a Semitic creation myth, the beginning of creation being the dividing of Tiâmat. But in the *Ode* before us, the primary reference is to the Conquest of the Dragon--the old serpent--by Christ when He descended to the abyss, with only a secondary reference to the perpetual repetition or reflection of this in the conquest of the devil by the Christian who descends into the baptismal waters'.

life with God: *The beginning, then, of the monastic life of the saint in the mandra was thus. He stood on a stone in the north-west corner of the mandra. Every year, during the holy days of the Lenten fast, he remained shut up in the mandra without food and drink until the day of the passover, being tempted by the evil Enemy of mankind, who envies the grace of the good and is the enemy of righteousness. He appeared to him in various forms, in a variety of moulds, like vipers and other serpents, just as he had appeared to him in the cave when he went out from the monastery; and they coiled themselves on his body with many threatenings, breathing fire, in order to turn him away from confidence in his Creator. But he stood in his integrity, and did not remove his eyes from heaven.*[383] And, on another occasion: *Now there was near the convent a certain cave which was dark and terrible, so that even if in the daytime one saw it he was terrified and trembled, from the sound of roaring which was heard from its interior. And when the fast of the forty days came, this Blessed One went to that cave, and there had many a conflict with Satan. For there came against him serpents and vipers, puffing up and hissing.... Yet he did not feel afraid at the sight of them, and was not alarmed by their noise, but gave himself over to prayer, and was looking to heaven and making the sign of the cross upon his breast, when suddenly Satan disappeared, vanishing like smoke before the wind. Then a great light shone in that cave, and a voice was heard by the Saint which said, 'Lo, the brethren are jealous of thee, and Satan harasses thee; but be strong and of good courage, because the Lord will not let go of thy hands. For lo, his grace keeps thee and his right hand upholds thee, and a head to thy brethren he will make thee, and Satan shall be trampled under thy feet'.*[384]

Another fight between Symeon and a snake ilustrates his struggle with demons at the beginning of his ascetic life: *For secretly, also, many battles he had with the Enemy of the good. For Satan brought against him, as he stood and prayed, a black serpent which was very fierce, and it puffed and hissed and threatened him and coiled itself up between his feet, and wound itself about the leg of the holy man many times, up to his knee, and tightened like a rope, as though it would terrify him and take him from prayer. But the Saint was not terrified, but persevered in prayer. And when he had finished his prayer, he raised himself erect, and went out that he might go away. And when he was a little way from it, the messenger of the Lord smote it, and rent it from end to end.*[385] Snakes are, according to the life of Symeon, a temptation aimed at weakening confidence in God. This temptation usually occured at the beginning of a spiritual life when the man of God was regarded as still fragile and when

383 *Syriac Life*, 548-549; tr. 137.

384 *Syriac Life*, 522-523, tr. 121; the same story is related by Antony, see Festugière, *Antioche*. 495(9).

385 *Syriac Life*, 529; tr. 125; cf. also *ibid.* 533-534 (128).

some confusion might still be present in his mind. The lapse of Mary, the niece of Abraham Qidunaya, is an example of such fragility. She was tempted by the serpent to relinquish her trust in God and to abandon the eremitic life: *After this had taken place the blessed Abraham had a fearful vivid dream: he beheld a huge serpent, disgusting to look at and hissing in a fearsome way. On leaving its lair it came towards him; it found there a dove* (i.e., Mary), *swallowed it up and went back to its lair. Then once again, two days later, he saw the same serpent leave its lair and come towards his house, whereupon it placed its head beneath the blessed man's feet; the serpent's belly was then ripped open, and there, safe and sound in its belly was the dove which it had swallowed. The blessed mc stretched out his hand and took the dove, which was still alive and unharmed.*[386] The story goes on to relate how Abraham found Mary and extracted her from t serpent's belly, the symbol of her sinful life. Some ascetic Syrian writers, als used the serpent to express heretical views whose aim, they argued, was to destroy the Church of God.[387]

Theodoret relates a strange story about Limnaeus. While walking at night he was attacked by a viper and wounded. He was eventually healed through the sign of the cross, prayer, and the invocation of God. The story lies somewhere between reality and myth: *On another occasion, when walking at night, he stepped with his heel on a sleeping viper, which caught the flat of his foot and inserted its teeth. Trying to protect his foot, he stooped down and moved his hand to it, which merely transferred to his hand the mouth of the beast. When he then used his left hand to help the other one, he attracted the anger of the beast against it as well. When it had satisfied its rage--it had inflicted on him more than ten bites--, it departed and went to its hole, while he was afflicted with bitter pains all over. But not even on this occasion did he accept medical skill, but applied to his wounds the remedies only of faith--the sign of the cross, prayer, and invocation of God.*[388] Theophilus of Antioch offers further evidence of a negative attitude towards the serpent. He recounts the history of man's separation from God after his deception by the serpent at the beginning of creation. Having been led astray by the serpent's cunning, fallen man gave names to a multitude of gods: *Since God possessed foreknowledge and knew that error, through the serpent, was going to refer to a multitude of non-existent gods--for although God is one, error was already undertaking to implant a multitude of gods....*[389] In the *Acts of Thomas* the serpent is similarly depicted as the anti-power to God: *The snake saith to him* (to Judah)*: I am a reptile, the son*

386 *Abraham Qidunaya*, 19; tr. 6-7.

387 Cf. *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Lamy), 19; Theodoret, *HR*, XXI, 17-18; Ephrem, *Hymn on Paradise*, 8.

388 *HR*, XXII, 5; tr. 151.

389 Theophilus of Antioch, II, 28; tr. 71; cf. also, *ibid.* II, 21-23.

of a reptile, and harmer, the son of harmer; I am the son of him, whom power was given over (all) creatures, and he troubled them. I am the son of him who makes himself like unto God to those who obey him, that they may do his will. The serpent continues, and considers itself the evil power which incites people to kill the just and to persecute the Church of God.[390]

From its very beginning, then, Syrian spirituality regarded the serpent as the embodiment of a power hostile to God. The serpent aimed to swallow up the just and to separate them from God completely. A contrary opinion may be found in Ignatius of Antioch who considers the serpent a symbol of wisdom, as in the Gospels: *Be prudent as the serpent in all things.*[391] The *Didascalia* generally reflects Syrian tradition on this subject: *Indeed, everyone who has some property, and does not give to others nor make use of it himself, lays up for himself a perishable treasure on earth; and he has inherited the place of the serpent who lays upon the treasure, and will cause a danger that he will be reckoned with him.*[392] This passage may be compared with some verses in the *Acts of Thomas*:

I went down to Egypt, and my companions parted from me.
I went straight to the serpent, I dwelt around his abode,
(waiting) till he should slumber and sleep,
and I could take the pearl from him....
I remembered the pearl, for which I had been sent to Egypt,
and I began to charm him, the terrible loud-breathing serpent....[393]

Again, the serpent represents the power which would destroy righteousness.

c. Wolf--Leopard

In the life of Symeon the Stylite, Satan attacks people in the form of a leopard: *he showed himself in the likeness of a leopard.*[394] Abraham Qidunaya described the sinner who deceived his niece as a wolf:[395] *Alas for my lamb, the wolf has snatched her away; my daughter has been taken captive.*[396]

390 *Acts of Thomas*, 32-33; tr. 80-81.
391 *Poly.* 22.
392 *Didascalia*, XVIII, 178; tr 162.
393 *Acts of Thomas*, 109-111.
394 *Syriac Life*, 523; tr. 121. Antony relates another story of the Leopard: 'Une panthère était venue de quelque part résider dans cette région et elle avait dévoré beaucoup d'hommes et d'animaux. On rapporta la chose au saint, et il ordonne que de l'eau mêlé de terre soit aspergée en ce lieu-là. J'y allai donc et j'aspergeai le lieu entier. Le lendemain ils retournèrent et trouvèrent la panthère qui gisait morte en ce lieu-là....', *Antony Life*, tr. 501, 21b.
395 Cf. *Mt.* 7,15.
396 *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Lamy), 19; tr. 7.

A similar identification of the powers of evil with the wolf can be found in the life of Malchus, whose abbot predicted he would become a lost sheep: *I* (the abbot) *see that you bear the brand of a son of Satan. I do not ask your reasons nor take your excuses. The sheep which forsakes its fellows is at once exposed to the jaws of the wolf.*[397] In this context the wolf represents those people who are moved by an evil power, whose aim is to capture every righteous person who might wander outside the flock, i.e., the Church of God. This conforms with imagery that is also found in the Syrian baptismal tradition.[398] The *Acts of Thomas* anticipates the later, eremitic interpretation of the wolf.[399] Ignatius c Antioch confirms the same ideas: *For there are many specious wolves who le captive with evil pleasures the runners in God's race, but they will find no plc if you are in unity.*[400] And the same imagery is used in the *Didascalia.* Here, the sinner: *For (during the time) when he shall be outside the fold and removed from the flock, wolves will devour him while he is astray, and he will perish completely.*[401] The *Didascalia* also describes heretics as wolves. Thus, the orthodox *will not receive those who falsely come in the name of apostles, and that they may know them by the changeableness of their words and by the effect of their works. For these are they of whom our Lord said: 'There shall come unto you men wearing the clothing of lambs, but inwardly ravening wolves, however, by their fruits you shall know them; beware of them therefore....*[402] The wolf is also used to represent the gentiles who are still outside the Church.[403]

d. Other animals

Other animals are mentioned in ascetic literature, where they are regarded as Satan's instruments. The life of Symeon the Stylite contains many examples of demons appearing in the likeness of animals: *And when he had stopped up the door and was all alone, there suddenly appeared to him the Adversary, who made a great contest with the Blessed One and began to war with him openly. For he came upon him in the likeness of soldiers who were riding horses. And they drew their swords and filled their bows and left their horses for an onrush upon the Blessed One.... And one day Satan appeared to him in the likeness of a camel which was lustful and foaming and mischievous, coming and putting its head upon his back. When he reached the Blessed One, there was one in the likeness of an old man standing before the Saint, and he took dust and threw it in*

397 Jerome, *Malchus*, 3; tr. 316.
398 Cf. Brock, *Holy Spirit*, 100-103.
399 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 79.
400 Ignatius of Antioch, *Phil.* 2, 2; tr. 241.
401 *Didascalia*, VII (82); tr. I, 77.
402 *Didascalia*, XXV, 239; tr. 219-220.
403 Cf. *Liber Graduum*, V, col. 100.

the mouth of the camel, when at once it vanished and was not, disappearing like smoke before the wind.[404] Symeon's biographer relates another story which is strongly based on a symbolic understanding of paganism and its spiritually degraded nature. According to this account, paganism is brought about by sinful man, and encouraged by evil spirits. The incident took place on the Lebanese pagan mountain: *Again, there came to the holy Saint many people from Lebanon, who told him about some evil creatures which went out in all Mount Lebanon and were ravaging and attacking men and devouring them. And lamentations and mournings were resounding in all the mountain, for there was not a village there in which there had been at least two or three people eaten every day. And sometimes, forsooth, they appeared as women whose hair was haved, wandering about lamenting; and sometimes again as beasts. And they even entered into houses and seized people, and snatched infants from their mothers' breasts, and ate them before them, while they stood and looked on at their sucklings, unable to succour their own children, so that there was mourning and lamentation. Absolutely no one was able to go out to the field unless many went out together armed with swords and staves. Not even under those circumstances would they get out of a man's way, except for a little way, and then again they would turn back into their tracks....*[405] Symeon then tells these people that God has rewarded them according to their deeds, and that they must give up worshipping idols and have faith in God. In order to be released from their punishment they must become Christians. When they obeyed Symeon by converting to Christianity the beasts disappeared.

One may compare yet another story about wild beasts: *Again, after the door of the Saint's cell was opened, there came there many people from the region of Aphshon, who made known to him about those large fieldmice and arnogs which were lacerating live sheep and eating their entrails so that they died. They even leaped upon the oxen and cattle, whereupon the animals would run until they were exhausted and fell; then they ate them. They had a way of grunting like swine, and would not flee from the presence of a man. Moreover they ventured up to small children and followed after them like dogs. And when the Saint heard, he was amazed and astounded, and marvelled and said: 'No one can stand before the abominable vermin if it is given power; before the justice of the Lord who can stand?' But as they greatly besought him with tears and groans, he said to them, 'Take some of this ḥnana* (a consecrated oil) *in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and make in every house three crosses, and on the four sides of every village make the sign of the cross; then keep vigil there and observe the eucharist three days and entreat our Lord. I have confidence in God whom I*

404 *Syriac Life*, 535-536; tr. 129.
405 *Syriac Life*, 589-592.

worship, that on the third day not even one will be found there.' So they went and did as he said to them, and on the third day no one knew what had happened to them, but it was as though the earth had opened its mouth and swallowed them up. And they turned away and went to their homes, praising our Lord who had shown lovingkindness to them.[406] This kind of tale is frequently told in early Syrian Christianity; the aim of such stories is to show that pagans are inhabited by evil spirits which appear in the likeness of wild animals as well as violent and strange human beings. The outer form of these evil spirits is a physical expression of the inner condition of pagans, who were seen as worshipping th world of sin and darkness. Finally, among the other animals which threaten Symeon, is the lion. As in the examples discussed above, the animal is a disgu adopted by Satan[407]: *Again Satan appeared to him in the likeness of a lio which came from the door and opened its mouth, and there went forth from its mouth as it were flames of fire, and it threatened and roared and lifted up its voice, and pawed with its feet and sent the gravel flying clear to the heavens. Then it rushed upon him violently. While its insane fury continued, after is manner, the Saint did not neglect his religious exercises. Then, again, it vanished like its fellows, and was not.*[408]

e. Conclusion

Like men, animals are divided between good and evil. In itself, every creature is good, though on account of their violent natures some creatures can be used by evil spirits to disturb righteous people. Animals manipulated by Satan represent certain deviations in human nature--anger, pride, violence, confusion, covetousness, fornication: *By continual recourse to prayer and hymnody he* (the hermit) *put to sleep desire, anger, pride, and all the other wild beasts of the soul.*[409] Hermits and other Christians who fought with Satan in the form of beasts, were really combatting their own sins. According to the various accounts, such struggles between hermits and wild animals occured most frequently at the beginning of the eremitic life when the hermit had not fully overcome his attachment to the sinful world. Thus, in Theodoret's view, more senior figures were attacked by wild beasts when God wished to test their endurance. Theodoret speaks of Limnaeus: *I am therefore of the opinion that the God of the universe allowed the beast to rage against his sacred body in order to reveal undisguised the endurance of this godly soul We see this same dispensation of His in the case of noble Job....*[410] In one respect, Theodoret's understanding of

406 *Syriac Life*, 588, tr. 162-163.
407 Cf. *1Pet.* 5,8.
408 *Syriac Life*, 537; tr. 130. Satan also threatened Symeon in the guise of a lion on another occasion, cf. *Syriac Life*, 549.
409 *HR*, X, 2; tr. 89-90.
410 *HR*, XXII, 6; tr 152.

this case is unusual. The early Syrian writers normally considered all such attacks to be the result of the victim's own sin. A completely pure human being could not, therefore, be harmed by any means whatsoever; such a person would be at peace with all creatures because God, who dwelt in his heart, would subordinate everything to him. According to Ignatius of Antioch, a man still fighting with beasts has still to learn how to be a disciple of Christ: *I had been sent a prisoner from Syria for the sake of our common name and hope, in the hope of obtaining by your prayers the privilege of fighting with the beasts at Rome, that by so doing I might be enabled to be a true disciple.*[411] Ignatius also identified wild beasts with his violent persecutors: *From Syria to Rome I am fighting with wild beasts, by land and sea, by night and day, bound to ten 'leopards'* (a company of soldiers), *and they become worse for kind treatment. Now I become the more a disciple for their ill deeds 'but not by this am I justified'....*[412]

Tatian would agree with Ignatius.[413] Unlike man, the beasts were not created in God's own likeness. He therefore considers those men who behave like the beasts to be inferior: *But man alone is 'the image and likeness of God'. I mean by man not one who acts like the animals, but one who has advanced far beyond his humanity towards God himself.*[414] Theophilus of Antioch furthers this understanding. He considers beasts which devour the flesh of weaker animals to be murderers. In his view, they transgress God's law, as do those men who behave like them: *the great fish and the carnivorous birds are in the likeness of greedy men and transgressors..., robbers and murderers and the godless are like great fish and wild animals and carnivorous birds. They virtually consume those weaker than themselves.... The quadrupeds and wild animals were a type of those men who are ignorant of God and sin against him and mind earthly things*[415] *and do not repent..., those who are ignorant of God and sin against him are like birds which have wings but are unable to fly and to run the upward course to the divine nature. Thus those of this sort are called men, but mind low and earthly things and are weighted down by sins.*

Wild animals are so called from their being hunted. They were not originally created evil or poisonous, for nothing was originally created evil by God; everything was good and very good[416]*: The sin of man made them evil, for when man transgressed they transgressed with him. If the master of a house does well, his servants necessarily live properly; if the master sins, his slaves sin with him.*

411 Ignatius, *Eph.* I, 1; tr. 175.
412 Ignatius, *Rom.* V, 1ff; tr; 321-233.
413 Cf. Tatian, 15.
414 Tatian, *Frag.* 1; tr. 79.
415 *Phil.* 3, 19.
416 *Gen.* 1, 31

Just so, it turned out that man, the master, sinned and the slaves sinned with him. Whenever man again returns to his natural state and so no longer does evil, they too will be restored to their original tameness.[417] This important chapter from Theophilus helps to clear up any confusion about the meaning of animals in early Syrian theology. It makes clear that the sin of man divided creation between good and evil. One consequence of man's transgression was that some animals began to attack people. The word 'animal' or 'wild beast' refers to man's sin, and because of his sin, man is identified with 'bad' animals and behaves like them. If the hermits were attacked by wild beasts, this happened because of their sins. It is even true to say that they were attacked by their sins for which the attacking animal was merely an instrument. One must exercise certain caution regarding the stories of the hermits, in which the physical a metaphysical worlds are seldom separated. In the present analysis I do not wi to make too sharp a distinction between real and imaginary animals. Nor do I try to draw a definitive line between true and imaginary episodes. In these writings every story is imbued with metaphysical and spiritual meaning. Episodes are transformed into cosmic events which deal, at one and the same time, with the spiritual and the material worlds.

The *Didascalia* contains such an interpretation of wild beasts and their relationship to men: *Do not (O bishop), thus lead with violence and be not vehement and decree not sharply and be not unmerciful. And mock not the people who are under your hand, nor hide from them the word of repentance. For this is that 'through violence and through scorn you have enslaved them', if you deal harshly with the members of your people, and chastize them 'with violence', and push them out and expel and receive not (again) those who sin, but harshly and without mercy hide repentance away from them; and you shall become a helper for the perversion of evil and for the scattering of the flock 'for meat to the beasts of the field'*[418]*, that is, to evil men of this world--but not to men in truth, but to beasts, to the heathen and to heretics. For him who goes out from the Church they follow immediately, and like evil beasts they devour him as meat. And because of your harshness, he who goes out of the Church will either go and enter among the heathen, or he will plunge into heresies and become completely a stranger and depart from the Church and from the hope of God. And of the perdition of that (person) you will be guilty, because you are (too) ready to expel and cast away those who sin, and when they have repented and been converted you do not wish to receive them again.*[419] The application of the term 'wild beasts' to heretics and gentiles is characteristic of Syrian theology.[420]

417 Theophilus, II, 16-17; tr. 53-55; cf. *Is.* 11, 6-9.
418 *Ez.* XXXIV, 5.
419 *Didascalia*, VII (85); tr. 79.
420 Cf. Theophilus of Antioch above.

8. THE CITY: CORRUPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

In late antiquity, during the period of the rise of Syrian eremitism, close relationships between town and village, civic life and peasant life, were almost non-existent. Each style of life belonged to a different world.[421] The separation between urban and rural life, between town and country, is prominent in the writings of St John Chrysostom. St John considered the cities as places corrupted by their inhabitants, while the countryside remained morally healthy.[422] The cities of the Roman empire were deeply hellenized. Chrysostom was concerned about the education of Christians in Antioch, who were strongly influenced by Greek non-Christian beliefs:[423] *And in fact a deep night oppresses the whole world. This is what we have to dispel and dissolve. It is night not among heretics nd among Greeks only, but also in the multitude on our side in respect of octrines and of life. For many* (among the Christians) *entirely disbelieve the resurrection; many fortify themselves with their horoscope; many adhere to superstitious observance, and to omens, and auguries, and presages. And some likewise employ amulets and charms.*[424] According to Chrysostom, in Antioch the theatre posed the greatest danger to Christian morality. Here, prostitution,

421 Cf. Brown, *Society and the Holy*, 154-156.

422 "Ne devez-vous pas accuser plutôt ceux qui rendent chaque ville si invivable (Chrysostom parle), si impropre à la vie chrétienne, que qui veut être sauvé est forcé de courir au désert?' Et encore: 'Quoi donc, dira-to-on, tous ceux qui habitent les villes sont-ils perdus, noyés par la tempête, nous faut-il, quittant, depeuplant les villes, nous rendre au désert, habiter les cimes des montagnes?" Chrysostom tried to fight against the corruption of the city because he was called by God to do so: '--Silence! Tout au contraire, comme j'ai dit plus haut, je voudrais,--je prie pour cela--, que nous jouissons d'une telle paix, que la tyrannie de nos vices se fût si bien brisée, que non seulement il n'y eût point nécessité pour les citadins de gagner les monts, mais qu'ils dussent au contraire ramener à leurs villes, comme des bannis après un long exil, les habitants des déserts....', Chrysostom, *The Detractor of the Monastic Life*; tr. Festugière, *Antioche*, 193.

423 'Antioche est une ville presque maritime, de population mêlée quant aux races et quant aux fortunes, avec une longue tradition d'opulence et de plaisir... Le vice grec y règne. Julien, Libanius, Chrysostome s'accordent à la dire corrompue.... Toute grande ville, ancienne ou moderne, comporte des tares inévitable....', Festugière, *Antioche*, 403, 405-406.

424 Chrysostom, *I Cor.* IV, 1; tr. 21. Duchesne, *Histoire* III, 3-5 says: 'La masse était chrétienne comme le pouvait être la masse, de surface et d'étiquette; l'eau du baptême l'avait touchée, l'esprit de l'Evangile ne l'avait pas pénétrée'. And he continues, 159: 'Tout le monde se convertissait; c'est bien, mais à quoi? A un autre culte ou à un autre genre de vie? S'agissait-il seulement de substituer le Christ à Jupiter, la liturgie eucharistique aux sacrifices anciens, le baptême au taurobole, et, par ailleurs, de vivre comme par le passé, d'après la morale commune et l'usage mondain? Beaucoup, il faut l'avouer, s'en tenaient là. Dans le clergé lui-même, il ne manquait pas de personnes qui interprétaient ainsi l'Evangile'. Festugière, *Antioche*, 404, believes that Christianity in Syria, especially in Antioch, was no different from Christianity in the rest of the Roman empire. Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 43, adds that Christianity in Syria did not destroy all pagan temples, or wipe out paganism; Christians continued to be interested in paganism. Cf. also Lucius, *Culte*, 145.

sorcery, and the worship of the pagan gods were all practised: *For indeed both adulteries and stolen marriages are there, and there are women playing the harlot, men prostituting, youths corrupting themselves: all there is iniquity to the full, all sorcery, all shame.*[425] Chrysostom accused Christians of taking part in these unlawful spectacles: *How many words then did we spend before this in exhorting many that were listless, and counselling them* (the Christians) *to abstain from the theatres, and the impurities of these places! And still they did not abstain; but always on this day they flocked together to the unlawful spectacles of the dancers; and they held their diabolical assembly in opposition to the full congregation of God's Church....*[426] On many occasions Chrysosto admonished the Christians for their pagan behaviour, urging them to shun pag theatres and public places: *Let them hearken to these things, who hasten to t theatres, and made themselves adulterers every day. For if the law commands t cut off him, whose connexion with us tends to our hurt; what plea can they have, who, by their haunting those places, attract towards them daily those even that have not yet become known to them, and procure to themselves occasions of ruin without number?*[427]

Chrysostom admits that many Christians rejected his admonitions; even after their 'repentance', they returned to the theatres: *Aye, but, methinks, it is the theatres that do this: to the theatres we owe it that the most of you so refuse to be curbed by us, and be reformed. What we build up here* (in the Church), *is thrown down there* (in the theatres) *and not only so, but the hearers themselves cannot help being filled with other filthinesses besides: so that the case is just the same as if one should want to clean out a place with a fountain above it discharging mire; for however much you may clean out, more runs in. So it is here: For when we clean people out, as they come here from the theatres with their filthiness, thither they go again, and take in a larger stock of filthiness, as if they lived for the purpose of only giving us trouble, and then come back to us, laden with ordure, in their manners, in their movements, in their words, in their laughter, in their idleness. Then once more we begin shovelling it out afresh, as if we had to do this only on purpose that, having sent them away clean, we may again see them clogging themselves with filth.*[428]

Apart from its inherent unsuitability as a place in which to pursue a life of silence and purity, for the Syrian hermits the city was a place impregnated with corruption. Maris the hermit suffered no corruption from the crowds who visited him: *Nevertheless, neither his bodily beauty nor his brilliance of voice nor his*

425 Chrysostom, *Matt.* XXXVII, 8; tr. 249.
426 Chrysostom, *Stat.* XV, 1; tr. 439.
427 *Matt.* XVII, 3; tr. 118; see also, *ibid.* VI, 10, VII, 7; *Stat.* XVII, 9.
428 Chrysostom, *Apos.* XXIV; tr. 161.

mixing with the multitude injured his beauty of soul, but living like recluses he looked after his own soul, and then increased his virtue through the labors of reclusion.[429] Rabbula was aware of the dangers threatening monks who were obliged to enter cities for the purpose of preaching or for other, personal reasons:

--The preacher (Sa'ora) who enters a village or a town shall not go around to the guesthouses and pass the night with the secular people, but in the Church or monastery if there is one nigh.

--The brothers shall not leave their monasteries under the pretext of sicknesses, and roam in the towns or villages, but shall endure their pains in the monasteries for the sake of God's love.

--The monks shall not leave their residence and take (lit. earn) for themselves lawsuits on the behalf (lit. in the person) of others, and go into the town or to the judges.[430]

Similar rules were prescribed by Rabbula for the *Qyama*:

--The periodeutae or the priests or deacons shall not stay in the (public) lodgings or in an inn when they enter the town, but they shall stay in the xenodocheion of the church or in the mountains outside.

--Settle the contentions and do not go constantly (for this purpose) to the town; those who ignore you send to us.

--You shall not allow the benai qeiama to go to gatherings, or other places without priests, and the benat qeiama without the deaconesses.[431]

The rules attributed to Mar Ephrem propound a similar view of the city. They urge monks to watch their behaviour carefully when in cities: *When you are walking on the street, dignify your steps and discipline your look; and control your countenance; and do not eat anything on the street in order that the discipleship (of monasticism) will not be despised.*[432] On the other hand, there existed in Syria, especially in Antioch and the main cities, social problems which caused some people to flee the cities and to join the monks of the desert. Economic bankruptcy, political disorder, famine, social injustice, and other social and political problems of the Syrian Orient occurred during the period of the rise of Syrian eremitism. Such issues persuaded some people to join the eremitic life, not because they felt it was their vocation, but merely because they wanted to flee a decadent social situation. The monk who entered the vocation because he wanted to escape the misery of society did not please the emperor or the monastic authorities.[433] An imperial decree was issued on January 1, 370, in

429 *HR.* XX, 2; tr. 131.
430 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 27 (3); 30 (14.15).
431 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 42 (22), 45 (36-37).
432 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 19 (2).

an attempt to stop the flight from society to the monastic life: *Certain devotees of idleness have deserted the compulsory services of the municipalities, have betaken themselves to solitudes and secret places, and under the pretext of religion have joined with bands of hermit monks. We command, therefore, by Our well considered precept, that such persons and others of this kind who have been apprehended within Egypt shall be routed out from their hiding places by the Count of the Orient and shall be recalled to the performance of the compulsory public services of their municipalities....*[434]

According to Theophilus of Antioch, the first city was built by a murderer Cain, the second son of Adam and Eve.[435] Owing to his diabolic life and t' godless city founded by him, the world became corrupt and transgressed Law of God.[436] Consequently, in the *Acts of Thomas* the city is seen as a pl where evil can easily divert the innocent and corrupt the minds of the just. T Lord himself is a stranger in the cities of men.[437] One can summarize by saying that in early Syrian spirituality the city was regarded as a place where the power of evil enjoyed great freedom. Here moral constraints were very weak and people were easily led astray. Christianity, therefore, which aimed to preach the moral values of purity, peace, brotherhood, and justice, found itself in direct opposition to the morality of the city. Historically, the Christian cause has not always prevailed. Christians were continually torn between the teachings of the Church and the attractions of the city. Chrysostom and many other Fathers of the Church worked for a cause which had been fought for by the Church since its beginnings: *if any man should leave the assembly of the Church of God and go to the assembly of the gentiles, what shall he say, and what will be his excuse to God in the day of judgment.... Indeed, anyone who enters an assembly of the gentiles shall be reckoned as one of them, and shall receive the woe....*[438] Since the sinful world was virtually equated with urban life and because the hermit was a sinner who sought healing for his sins, his departure from the city was regarded as a major step towards a quick and sure regeneration.

9. YOUTH--IMMATURITY

Youth, which is synonymous with immaturity in Syrian spirituality, is an important subject in the eremitic life. Most hermits came to the eremitic life when they were young and still much disturbed by youthful passions. Eremitic literature called on young hermits to stand up to their boyish deviations:

433 Cf. Downey, *Antioch*, 376-378. 419-432. 456.

434 *Theodosian Code*, 12.1.63. (Posted at Beirut on the Kalends of January in the year of the consulship of Valentinian and Valens Augustuses.)

435 Cf. *Gen.*, 4, 17.

436 Cf. Theophilus of Antioch, II, 30.

437 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 62-63, 72.

438 *Didascalia*, XIII, 151-152; tr. II, 137-138.

-- Purify the mind of your boyhood, and approach the learning entirely (well)....

-- Make yourself wise (so that you may stay away) from all manners of your youth; remove from you all works of boyhood and you will find good things for yourself.

-- Rebuke the habits of youth that they may not multiply upon you and subdue you; and take care diligently in order that they will not be added, one upon another.[439]

Youth was a major concern for Aphrahat, who regarded the sin of Adam and Eve as a sin of youth and, therefore, immaturity. Adam's sin, however, was urged by the maturity of Noah and his sons, whose purity persisted through the generations of believers until the appearance of Christ, who redeemed Adam and Eve and uprooted their sin.[440]

10. BLACK MEN--DARKNESS

In Syrian asceticism, as well as in the life of the early Church in general, black men played a considerable role. It was believed that Satan used their image as an expression of his dark nature. The appearance of Satan as a black man, especially an Ethiopian, was a portent of disaster[441]: *Now one time it happened that a certain large ship was going down from Arabia from the upper district, and there were in it many people both men and women who were going down to their homes in Syria. Having embarked, they had gone half the journey, when the waves became stirred up, a violent wind raged, darkness fell upon them, and the ship was near to capsizing. For they would mount up to the sky, as it is written*[442]*, and would descend into the abyss. And as they cried out and were distressed and supplicated with tears and groans, and there was no help nor deliverance from any quarter, every one covered himself and fell upon his face, that he might not see death approaching. For they felt sure that they should never see dry land again, especially because they saw a man who was black and looked like an Indian,*[443] *who came and stood on the top of the mast which stood amidships. For it was said of him that every time he was seen in a ship he sank her.*[444] James of Cyrrhestica saw a demon in the form of an Ethiopian man and was filled with fear. Theodoret: *He* (James) *also recounted to me the attacks of all kinds made on him by the evil demons. 'At my very entry,' he said, 'into this*

439 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 20-21 (7-11).

440 CF. Aphrahat in this work pp. 74-80.

441 Cf. on this subject: Beardsley, 'The Negro'; Snowden, 'Blacks in Antiquity'; Bourguet, 'La couleur noire'.

442 *Ps.* 107, 2.3.6.

443 "Indian' here means Ethiopian (negro) as often', Lent, 'Syriac Life', 173.

444 *Syriac Life*, 604; tr. 172-173.

way of life, I used to see someone naked, with the appearance of an Ethiopian,[445] *shooting fire from his eyes. I, on seeing him, would be filled with fear, have recourse to prayer and could not bear to take food, for it was at this time that he used to appear....*'[446] The appearance of Satan in the form of a black man recalls the *Acts of Thomas*,[447] where the colour of Satan is black.[448] His colour, however, is not invariably black and he did not always choose the image of an Ethiopian for his manifestations. Satan also appeared in the likeness of a blond white man: *On another occasion...*, (James adds) *in the likeness of a youth in full vigor, resplendent in bloom and adorned with blond hair, he (Satan) ca up to me both grinning and flirting....*[449] The frequent identification of evil w darkness or blackness in Syrian asceticism is already present in early Syr spirituality.[450] The black man personified human sins and the vices of t human soul. Black is also the negation of white, in which capacity it was made to stand in opposition to Christian resurrection, which was symbolised by whiteness. Those who had visions of black demons, therefore, continued to live in the world of sin because black demons or even black thoughts were regarded as a projection of their sins. Visions of black demons were seen as one of the mysteries of death and life, of sin and grace.

11. CONCLUSION: SIN AND DEMONS

The sinful world is the province of demons. In Syrian spirituality Satan was identified with the vices of the soul; thus, the demon was fornication, violence, vanity, covetousness, murder, and the whole power of the world of darkness. Mary, Abraham Qidunaya's niece, was deceived or threatened by a corrupt man whose thoughts and behaviour stemmed from the devil; she was ensnared by Satan: *When these twenty years had elapsed, Satan took notice of her and tried to ensnare her... and then an evil man assaulted her with his blandishments, bespattering her with the mud of his lust.*[451] God delivered Symeon the Stylite from an attack by the chief of the Isaurians, whom the author of his life identifies with Satan.[452] Similarly, when Symeon suffered a blinding eye disease, the event was considered as an attack by Satan: *One time as he stood and prayed, Satan appeared to him in the likeness of mist and smote him suddenly upon his eyes and took his vision....*[453] Demons were understood to be

445 I have altered Price's translation from an *Egyptian* to an *Ethiopian*. The Greek text makes no mention of an Egyptian.

446 *HR*, XXI, 23; tr. 142.

447 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 55, 64.

448 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 44.

449 *HR*, XXI, 28; tr. 144.

450 Cf. *Odes of Solomon*, 11, 19; 15, 2; 16, 5-6; 18, 6; 21, 3; *Acts of Thomas*, 108-113; 118; 121-122; Theophilus of Antioch, I, 2; *Didascalia*, XXI, 210-211.

451 *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Lamy), 18; tr. 5.

452 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 512-513.

the enemies of all humankind. They used people to attack their fellow-men, and they attacked especially God's servants who aimed to destroy the evil realm and build up the Kingdom of God. Alexander's biographer stated that demons attacked Alexander Akoimetoi and his disciples in order to impede his preaching mission.[454] But the Evil power was unable to overcome Alexander who put all his trust in God: *Let us consider, then, the outcome of this man* (Alexander) *who passed among us, following an uninterrupted course like the sun's in order to proclaim the Judge of the contest and Sun of righteousness. Let us take up the armour through which he defeated the whole panoply of the enemy. And not only did he put to flight the principalities and powers and world rulers of this present 'arkness and the spiritual hosts of wickedness through this same armour, but he lso held at bay the whole world when it strove against him. For the enemy onstantly attacked him but was always routed by the power of God; and being unable to achieve anything, he summoned all humanity as his allies, and they attacked the brave spiritual athlete in a variety of ways.*[455]

A prostitute was identified with a demon of adultery and fornication[456] and a violent man with a demon of violence and destruction.[457] In Alexander's life, the demon possessed a woman because of her evil deeds.[458] The persecutors of Christians were thought to be manipulated by demons.[459] It was believed that pagans worshipped demons, interpreted as the corrupted beliefs of sinful humanity,[460] while heretics worked to spread the kingdom of Satan.[461]

According to John the Solitary, Satan is unable to see or touch the spirit because he is inferior to it. Satan is also unable to have any intercourse with the soul; it too is superior to him. The soul is connected to the body, however, and can therefore be harmed by demons, who work through the material world to interfere with the world of the spirit. Satan continually tries to cause sickness and disharmony in the physical world in order to upset the harmony and peace of the spiritual world, and shroud it in darkness.[462] Satan struggles incessantly against the kingdom of God, though he is unable to conquer it.[463] Satan, therefore, is ignorance, violence and destruction.[464] As such, he resides in

453 *Syriac Life*. 522; tr. 120.
454 Cf. Stoop, *Alexander*, 48-50. See text in this work pp.170-171.
455 Stoop, *Alexander*, 2.
456 Cf. *Syriac Life*. 532.
457 Cf. *Syriac Life*. 512f; 566; 569f; 642.
458 Stoop, *Alexander*, 15.
459 Cf. *HR*, II, 14.
460 Cf. *HR*, IV, 2; XVI, 1; XVII, 5; XXVI, 13; XXVII, 1.5.
461 Cf. *HR*, XXI, 15-18.
462 Cf. John the Solitary, (Syriac), VI, 180-315.
463 Cf. John the Solitary, (Syriac), VI, 180-185; X, 115 ff.
464 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 611ff.; *HR*, III, 7; X, 6; XIII, 7; XXI, 12, 23; XXVII, 1; XXVIII, 1-2; *Liber*

human nature, for he is identical with human disharmony. And yet, in himself, he has no existence. He vanishes completely from the world when the power of the Spirit restores the harmony and peace of human nature.[465] The demons are the physical and inner sickness of humanity, in which capacity they constitute the sinful world. Though they can be cured, the diseases of the body are often manifestations of inner, spiritual diseases. The hermits who fought against demons were thus struggling with their own sickness, disharmony, and disturbance--i.e., with their sins. These sins are expressions of disorder in the nature of sinful man and hence of man's state of disharmony with the universe.

Graduum, 880-889; Macarius, *Homilies*, 5, 44-45; *Antony Life*, 499 (17); *Didascalia*, III, 34-36; VII, 87; XV, 163-164; XVIII, 183.

465 Cf. next chapter about healing

II. HEALING: THE SCHOOL OF SECLUSION

Seclusion in early Syrian spirituality was a path towards the cleansing of worldly sin.[1] The aim of seclusion was to become a true Christian by rediscovering the heavenly world within oneself. It was an attempt to uncover the realm of knowledge and purity, and so to achieve unity with God.

A. REPENTANCE AND RENUNCIATION

1. THE REPENTANT HERMIT

Repentance is the necessary first step towards healing. One must recognise oneself as a sinner seeking to abandon the world of sin in order to live forever in God's purity. Eusebius of Asikha was a true penitent; his labours in the eremi' life constituted a continual act of repentance.[2] For Maris, the life of seclus was a school of repentance and endurance.[3] James of Cyrrhestica achie special renown among other hermits because of his particularly strenuous acts repentance.[4] Symeon the Stylite was famous for his love of the penitential life, which he practised as a hermit.[5] Thalassius chose the life of mortification in the desert as a way of atoning for his sinful life.[6] Domnina suffered greatly in her desire to achieve total repentance.[7] Like other men, the hermit was a sinner who needed absolution, thus the early Syrian hermits conceived of their way of life as one of repentance. The hermit who strayed from the life of repentance through weakness had to return to his life of seclusion and once again seek mercy and forgiveness from God.[8] From the very beginning, sin and repentance constituted the main struggle of the Christian life. The Syrian hermits took up the struggle under the auspices of their Church but it was an issue for all Christians who sought to fulfil the commandments of their faith: *Let grace come and let this world pass away. Hosannah to the God of david. If any man be holy, let him come! if any man be not, let him repent: Maranatha, Amen.*[9]

1 I will refer to a 'School of Seclusion', rather than a 'monastic school', a 'solitary school' or an 'ascetic school', since the term most accurately conveys the meaning of' seclusion in early Syrian eremitism.

2 Cf. *HR*, XVIII, 1.

3 Cf. *HR*, XX, 2.

4 Cf. *HR*, XXI, 2.

5 Cf. *HR*, XXVI, 1.

6 Cf. *HR*, XXVIII, 4.

7 Cf. *HR*, XXX, 2.

8 Cf. the story of Mary, niece of *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Lamy), IV, 24ff. A similar situation is described in the *Rules* of Rabbula for the *Qyama*: 'Send into the monasteries the benai qeiama or the bnat qeiama, who have fallen from their rank, for repentance; but although they stay in the monastery they shall not be received in the church, but be suspended with their parents, as long as it is right', Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 44 (29).

9 *Didache*, X, 6; tr. 325. See also: Theophilus of Antioch, II, 16, 17, 26, 29; III, 11, 19;

2. HOME AND RELATIVES

The Christian vocation constituted a challenge laid down to the man of this world to transform himself into a man of heaven. The hermit was called upon to leave his old self behind in order to take his place amongst the lovers of God: *He* (Peter the Galatian) *settled at Antioch; observing the city's love of God he preferred the foreign city to his homeland, counting as fellow-citizens not those of the same race and family but those of the same convictions, sharing the faith and bearing the same yoke of piety.*[10]. Aphrahat was disgusted by the impiety of his family, and was obliged to give up his native country to seek the place of faith: *then, in disgust at the impiety of his kin, he chose a foreign country in preference to his own, and repaired to Edessa, a city large and well-populated and exceptionally illustrious in piety.*[11] Theodoret relates that *an unmarried girl of marriageable age... left behind her mother and family and fled to a convent that contained a company of athletes...*[12] Theodosius also *abandoned home, family, and all the rest, in order, in the Gospel phrase, to buy the pearl of great price.*[13]

A hermit did not reject his homeland and his parents; rather, he renouced all involvement with wordly desires, possessions, and Mammon. These were a destructive influence on those who took refuge in them. [14] One day, there came to Marcianus *from his fatherland his sister with her son.... she brought a lavish supply of the necessities he needed. He did not consent to see his sister, but received his nephew, since it was the time laid down for meeting people. When they begged him to accept what they had brought, he asked, 'Through how many monasteries have you come? To which of them did you give some of this?' When his nephew replied that they had given to none, he said: 'Go away with what you have brought, for we do not need any of it, nor if we did would we accept it. For you have done us this kindness out of consideratin for physical relationship but not for the service of God; for if it was not only closeness of kinship that you valued, you would not have apportioned what you brought to us alone.' With these words he dismissed his nephew with his sister, after giving orders that not even a little of what they had brought was to be accepted.*[15] Peter the Galatian believed that Theodoret of Cyrrhus could never be a hermit because of the great

Didascalia, III, 16; V, 60-62; VI; VII 83ff.; X; XI, 134-135, 141; XV, 166; XVIII, 182; XX, 214; XXV, 239, 241; *Acts of Thomas*, 14, 34, 38, 43, 65, 66, 64, 54, 110-111, 135; Tatian, 15; Macarius, *Homilies*, 33 (21), 35 (25), 90 (4), 222.

10 *HR*, IX, 3; tr. 82.

11 *HR*, VIII; tr. 72.

12 *HR*, IX, 12; tr. 86.

13 *HR*, X, 1; tr. 89; Cf. *Mt.* 13, 46.

14 Cf. Beck, *Sermones*, IV, 18 (57-61).

15 *HR*, III, 14; tr. 43-44.

love that his parents felt for him.[16] Malchus' parents were completely opposed to his wish to take up the life of seclusion: *My parents regarding me as the heir and the only survivor of their race, wished to force me into marriage, but I said I would rather be a monk. How my father threatened and my father coaxed me to betray my chastity requires no other proof than the fact that I fled from home and parents.*[17] Symeon the Stylite refused to see his mother when she came to visit him because he did not consider himself worthy of seeing her in this world. Later, when his mother died, she was buried in front of his column.[18] Rabbula's *Rules* for Monks acknowledge the problem of hermits and their parents; they prescribe that a hermit should never meet with his relatives: *The rešai-dairatʿ* (the abbots of the monasteries) *shall not allow the brothers to meet with th relatives nor should they go out and go to them, in order that they do not re* (in their zeal).[19]

St. Ephrem's *memre on solitaries* praised the hermits who left their home and relatives for the sake of the kingdom of God: *They possess kindred and family, houses, wealth and property. But they deemed it all as naught, so as to gain the kingdom above.*[20] Those hermits were motivated by the spirituality of the New Testament. This was taken up by the *Didascalia: Now everyone who learns a handicraft watches his master and sees how, through his skill and his knowledge he performs the work of his craft.... We then, who have our Lord for master and teacher, why do we not imitate His teaching and His conduct?.... Indeed, He endured for our sake, but we for our own sake. Or does our Lord really need that we should suffer for Him except for this only that He wishes to prove the love of our faith and of our free will? Let us thus part from our parents and our kinsfolk, and with all that is in this world, and even with ourselves.*[21]

Rabbula, who was a disciple of Alexander Akoimetos, decided to give up his social career, his married life, his home and relatives in order to be free for his eremitic life. But he kept his daughters with him and trained them in the ascetic life: *Rabbula was strengthened in his faith by this sign. Desiring to be without distractions in his meditation on God, he gave the Council's property to the Council, and gave his wife's property to his wife and daughters and maidservants. His wife consented to her husband's plan, and set up a monastery, and remained there with her daughters and maidservants, serving the Lord with her whole heart. Rabbula freed his slaves, giving them an adequate allowance. He sold his property and clothing and gave to the poor, then went into the desert*

16 Cf. *HR*, IX, 4.
17 Jerome, *Malchus*, 316 (3).
18 Cf. *Antony Life*, 497 (14).
19 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 30 (13).
20 Cf. Beck, *Sermones*, IV, 18 (57-61).
21 *Didascalia*, XIX, 190-191.

and took to asceticism with such severity that he could not be accounted as one clothed in a human body....[22] The eremitic tradition of leaving home and family did not apply to every hermit. Marana and Kyra, for example, acquired a small dwelling in their home town where they led their life of seclusion.[23] Similarly, *Domnina set up a small hut in the garden of her mother's house.*[24] However, the case of Marana, Kyra and Domnina seems to belong only to female eremitism, for no similar case is recorded among the male hermits in the sources on the early Syrian life of seclusion.

3. WANDERING--THE HOMELESS HERMITS

Wandering was a characteristic feature of early Syrian eremitism. A hermit did not wish to belong to any earthly place or to possess any home other than his eternal home in heaven. He thought of himself as a sojourner on this earth, with no stable home. Wandering was one of the paths to the renunciation of earthly ties and possessions: *The prudent have despised all things and reckoned the world as naught, and they wander through deserts and wastelands, that they be not soiled with sin.*[25] Wandering was a way of life adopted in imitation of prophets such as Elias and John the Baptist who took to the deserts.[26] Alexander the Sleepless (Akoimetos) pioneered the life of wandering in the Syrian Orient; he spent his entire life wandering through deserts, towns, and villages in the company of a few disciples. Alexander, whose itinerant life took him from Mesopotamia to Antioch, to Constantinople and finally to the Black Sea, combined wandering with preaching.[27] The life of the *Boskoi* consisted in roaming the mountains; they had no permanent dwelling-places in order to keep their minds free of earthly ties.[28] Macedonius' motivation differed from that of other hermits. He led a wandering life because he wanted to escape from crowds of visitors: *He had as his wrestling-ground and stadium the tops of mountains; he did not settle in one place, but now dwelt in this one and then transferred to that. This he did not through dislike of the places, but to escape from the crowds of those who visited him and flocked from all sides.*[29]

The absence of the wandering hermits from the *Historia Religiosa*, testifies to Theodoret's dislike of this way of life. Such a life was susceptible to abuse. In his *Rules*, Rabbula warned the *Qyama* against wandering without permission: *No one among the priests or deacons or benai qeiama shall travel without our*

22 Stoop, *Alexander*, 20.
23 Cf. *HR*, XIX, 2.
24 *HR*, XXX, 1; tr. 186.
25 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 471.
26 *On Solitaries*, 472.
27 See Alexander's life in this work, pp. 379-385.
28 See the Shepherds in this work, p. 378.
29 *HR*, XIII, 2; tr. 100.

permission to the (imperial) court or to any far off place and leave his Church, not even if he has the business of the village or of his church.[30] The wandering hermits were inspired by the early tradition of the Syrian Church. Ignatius of Antioch, for example, called upon Christians to be travellers with God: *You are then all fellow travellers, and carry with you God...*[31] The *Didache* also makes special mention of travelling Christians who roamed through inhabited areas preaching the kingdom of God.[32] Judas Thomas and his followers considered themselves *wandering men*,[33] *despised and wretched above all men, withc possessions or wealth.*[34]

4. THE STRANGER

The homeless and wandering hermit was called the *stranger* because imitated Jesus Christ and his disciples who were strangers in this transiei. world.[35] According to Theodoret, Abraham was the archetype of the stranger, the first example of a wandering believer made homeless because he followed God's will: *My account however, proceeding on its way, has reached the one who was actually styled the 'friend' of God, and who observed and taught exactly the rules of friendship. Who of those with any education in the things of God does not know how Abraham the great patriarch obeyed the call of God, how he left his fathers' house and preferred the foreign land to his fatherland?*[36]

Teodoret favoured the expression *a foreign country* and frequently used it to describe hermits who had left their fatherland.[37] In a *memra* attributed to Ephrem, the hermit considers himself a stranger to the world and its inhabitants.[38] Chrysostom believed that all those who belonged to the monastic movement became strangers to the world.[39] Alexander the Sleepless

30 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 45 (38).
31 Ignatius, *Eph.* IX. 2.
32 *Didache*, XI, XII, XIII.
33 About the term 'wandering', cf. Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 270.
34 *Acts of Thomas*, 100, 107, 136; tr. 116, 137.
35 Brock, 'Asceticism', 9, traces the origin of the word 'stranger' back to the Old and New Testaments: 'One striking feature of the *Acts of Thomas* is the frequency with which the terms 'stranger' and 'foreigner' are used of the Christian in this world, and this will be found to be an extremely common theme throughout Syriac-speaking Christianity. The concept will be based on Old Testament passages such as Psalm cxxxvii, 4, referring to the exile of the Israelites in 'a foreign land' (thence applied to the life of Christians in the world), or New Testament ones like Hebrews xi, 13, where the great Old Testament figures, held up as models of faith, are described as having 'confessed themselves no more than strangers and passing travellers on earth''; for further details see Guillaumont, *Aux origines*, 104-107; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 271-272; Nagel, *Askese*, 90-96.
36 *HR*, XXXI, 17; tr. 201.
37 Cf. *HR*, VIII, 1; IX, 3; XI, 1; XII, 2.
38 Cf. Vööbus, *Literary Critical Studies*, 16.
39 Cf. Chrysostom, *I Tim.* and Festugière, *Antioche*, 340.

(Akoimetos) went to Syria in order to forget his homeland land: *His desire was to be alienated from his country and friends and family for the sake of the hope that lay before him, and draw near to Christ the Master alone.* [40] Even before the rise of the eremitic movement, the theme of the *stranger* was an important one in the Syrian Church. The *Odes of Solomon* reserve special praise for the stranger:

I was crowned by my God,

And my crown is the living One....

And all who saw me were amazed,

And I seemed to them to be a stranger.

And he who knew and brought me up is the Most High in all his perfection....[41]

The *Didascalia* required Christians to welcome the stranger[42] and to love him as they loved Jesus Christ because *there is no prophet that is acceptable in his country*:[43] *let him be honoured with a place that suits, and let not Christ, who loves strangers, be despised in him.*[44] The *Acts of Thomas* describes the Christian who has given up life in the sinful world and decided to follow Jesus Christ as a stranger: '*Let us too go, that we may not be spoken ill of, especially as we are strangers...', and they were all looking upon him as upon a stranger, who came from another place.*[45]

5. THE WORLD

The world is God's sacred creation, full of His peace, love, and wonder. It constituted a subject of meditation for the hermits as an image of God's beauty and glory.[46] Through meditation, the hermit was inspired to love God and to discover His mystery and majesty in a world which testified to His knowledge and perfection. The world which was forsaken by the hermits was the world of sin, God's world degraded and polluted by man's violence, covetousness, pride, possessions, and hatred.[47] Chrysostom states that the hermits renounced the world of murderer, riches, lust, violence, and noise and fled to the desert to start a new life: *And observe from their retreats at once the first signs of their*

40 Cf. Beck, *Sermones*, IV, 18 (57-61).

41 Cf. *Odes of Solomon*, XVII, 1-7; tr. 707.

42 The word 'stranger' is used in the *Didascalia* with its wider meaning which includes hospitality and almsgiving.

43 *Mt.* 13, 57.

44 *Didascalia*, XII; tr. 147ff.

45 *Acts of Thomas*, 4; tr. 66; cf. also, *ibid.* 15, 33, 72, 96, 99, 100, 109 (31), 123, 131, 137, 154. For details see Klijn, *Acts of Thomas*, 165-166.

46 Cf. Brock, 'World and Sacraments', 686ff; Baker, 'Syriac Origin', 349.

47 Cf. *Liber Graduum*, 32, 132f, 260ff, 588ff, 772ff.

tranquility. For they have fled from market places, and cities, and the tumults amidst men, and have chosen the life in mountains, that which hath nothing in common with the things present, that which undergoes none of the ills of man, no worldly sorrows, no grief, no care so great, no dangers, no plots, no envy, no jealousy, no lawless lusts, nor any other thing of this kind...[48]

The earthly world of sorrow and danger is a transitory one which the hermit gives up for the sake of truth:[49] *The man who loves the things hereafter is no submerged in things visible, lest because of Mammon he be consumed by fi together with the tares. The prudent have despised all things and reckoned t world as naught.... Because the world ensnares through riches, they renounce the world entire. Because they were stifled by Mammon, the same they despised, degraded, and derided.... Because the world rejoices, they made sadness their love. And because they saw delicacies in the world, they nourished themselves on roots.... Because they saw ostentation in the world, they made humility their love.... And because they saw lust in the world, they laid hold of pure fasting.... And because they saw lewdness in the world, they laid hold of chastity.... And because they saw turmoil in the world, they made their love silent rest.... In the world they saw vile deceit, and lo, they laid hold of open truthfulness.... In the world they saw lies and falsehood, and so they loved integrity.... And because they saw artifice in the world, they chose simplicity....*[50] John the Solitary divided the world in two: the world of angels and the world of men. Sin could only be committed in the world of men because it was weak and inferior to the perfect world of angels. Man must imitate the world of angels to free himself from the slavery of sin and to become perfect.[51]

From an early date, Syrian spirituality had divided the world into many parts, based on the existence of just and sinful men; Theophilus of Antioch gave a clear description of the world on this basis: *And we say that for us the world is in the likeness of the sea. For just as the sea, if it did not have the flow of rivers and springs as a supply of nourishment, would long ago have been parched because of its saltiness, so also the world, if it had not had the law of God and the prophets flowing and gushing forth with sweetness and compassion and righteousness and the teaching of God's holy commandments, would already have failed because of the evil and sin abounding in it. And as in the sea there are some islands which are habitable and well-watered and fertile, and have anchorages and havens so that those who are tossed by storms can take refuge in them, so God gave the world, which is agitated and tossed by sins, certain*

48 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXVIII, 3; tr. 417. Cf. *ibid.* LV, 7; LXVIII, 4-5; LXIX, 3; LXIX, 4; LXXII, 4.

49 See Lent, 'Syriac Life', 546, 618.

50 Beck, *Sermones*, IV, 16, 25; tr. 471, 477-478.

51 John the Solitary, IV, 36-38.

assemblies called holy churches, in which as in havens with good mooring-places are the teachings of truth. In these will take refuge those who wish to be saved, when they are lovers of truth and want to escape the wrath and judgement of God. And as, again, there are other islands which are rocky and waterless and barren, full of wild beasts and uninhabitable, harmful to those who sail and are tossed by storms, islands on which ships are impaled and those who land perish, so also are the teachings of error--I mean of the heresies--which destroy those who approach them. For they are not guided by the word of truth, but just as pirates, when they have filled ships, run them on the places mentioned above, in order to destroy them, so it happens that those who stray from the truth are destroyed by error.[52] Ignatius of Antioch and The *Acts of Thomas* both call on Christians to abandon the world of sin and dwell in God.[53] The hermit considered himself a *stranger and a pilgrim*[54] in the world of corruption, one who was travelling to the world of peace and love. This journey from corruption to purity was the journey of his heart from darkness to light, from the world of sin to the heavenly world of purity.

6. THE DESERT

The desert is the complete antithesis of the corrupt city.[55] It provided a focal point for the hermit's rejection of all that stood between himself and God: *They occupied the deserts, that they may instruct thee to despise the tumults in the midst of the world.*[56] The *Homily on the Solitaries*, attributed to Ephrem, adds: *they wander through deserts and wastelands, that they be not soiled with sin.*[57] The desert embodied peace, purity, and silence; it was a haven from sinful society: *They saw that in the desert no evil befell Elias; but as soon as he set foot in inhabited regions, the frenzied Jezebel pursued him. and whilst John abode in the wilderness, crowds came out to greet him; yet scarcely had he entered inhabited lands, when Herod cut off his head. Wherefore they abandoned the world so full of perils, and they took flight, and in the desert was their sojourn until they received their reward. Two advantages did they find in the wasteland whither they withdrew: they remained preserved from falls and from the disgrace of men. There they are shielded from injustice and from covetousness which causes ruin. There they are shielded from guile, from mockery and from envy there from pre-eminence, and there from abominable pride.*[58]

52 Theophilus of Antioch, II, 14; tr. 51.
53 Ignatius of Antioch, *Mag.* 5, 2; *Rom.* 3; 4, 3; 6, 2; 7, 1. *Acts of Thomas*, 36, 66.
54 Cf. Chrysostom, *Mt.* LV, 8; LXIX, 4; LXXII, 3.
55 See city in this work, pp. 182-185.
56 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXXII, 4; tr. 439.
57 Beck, *Sermones* IV, II, 8; tr. 471; see, *ibid.* II, 62.
58 Beck, *Sermones* IV, II, 429-449; tr. 478; cf. *HR*, II, 13; VI, 8.

Alexander the Sleepless (Akoimetos) considered the desert a place where God could test the real faith of his followers. It is a place of suffering and temptation and one who could resist its frightening emptiness was truly worthy to be called a disciple of Christ. Alexander led his converted disciple Rabbula to the desert to test his new Christian faith and to show him the marvellous deeds of God.[59] He also tested the thieves[60] and the seventy disciples whom he chose to preach the Kingdom of God: *I shall relate truthfully how this came about When his eight companies were arrayed in perfect faith, and had long be sending up their prayers and hymns to God with joy and gladness of heart, thought to himself, 'With all this freedom from care, laziness should never allowed to creep in'. And again he induced in himself physical suffering, as w his habit. And he called by name 150 brave soldiers of Christ who truly possessed the breastplate of faith and the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Holy Spirit, and said to them, 'Brothers, let us test whether we are perfect in faith, and let us go through this terrible wilderness of the unbelievers and show by our works that we believe in God with all our heart, and not in word alone'. For he wanted at first to go to Egypt and teach the unbelievers there, those who put their faith in the works of their own hands, but the Holy Spirit prevented him. His true disciples, hearing his plan, decided single-mindedly to follow him. Blessed Alexander wanted to leave that place altogether, and he did not make this known to anyone, but said, 'I am going to visit the brothers in the desert'....*

Crossing the river Euphrates once again, the blessed Alexander and the disciples he had chosen went into the Persian desert, taking no necessities except the parchments on which they had the Holy Scriptures. They spent their time in the wilderness with only one tunic, and night and day they performed their uninterrupted rule of hymnody. It happened at that time, in order that they should be shown more excellent, that they were tempted by the needs of the flesh. For many days they had nothing but nuts to eat, and had to content themselves with these. Thirty of them murmured against the blessed one, and said to him, as [the Israelites] had said to Moses, 'Have you led us into this desert to starve us to death?';[61] *and they wanted secretly to return to the monastery. They were thinking to themselves of this plan; but the blessed one knew their intention in the Spirit. For nothing escaped him since he was truly a second Moses, faithful in all his house. Calling them together he condemned their lack of faith and reproved them, and released them to return to the monastery he had left, saying to them in a loud voice, 'Believe me, brothers, today the Lord will visit us and put to shame your lack of faith'. They had gone a short way when, as the saint*

59 Stoop, *Alexander*, 18-20.
60 Stoop, *Alexander*, 24-25.
61 *Ex.* 16, 3.

had said, the Lord sent Roman tribunes and soldiers, bringing them good things from God. They asked them to come to their forts and bless them. For there are forts between the Romans and the Persians against the barbarians, ten and twenty milestones apart. The brothers who had deserted saw the men coming from afar off and, realising that it was happening just as the holy father had said, were strengthened in their faith. Some of them fell on their faces and repented, and were united with the brotherhood. The others who were with him went into the inner desert and dwelt there until their deaths. And blessed Alexander, commanded by the Holy Spirit to go with them, as happened to the 'postle Peter, followed them without hesitation; he went right through the order country, strengthening everyone in their faith....[62]

The desert was often considered a shelter for those who were persecuted by society; indeed, there may have been persecuted people who lived there even though they were not hermits.[63] The Syrian desert, however, is not a true desert. It can sustain life because it is close to inhabited lands and not totally devoid of food and water.[64] Apart from its physical character, the desert embodied a concept of emptiness and silence--the means by which the hermit could cast off his worldly self and become a man of God. Although the desert was uninhabited, for the hermits it became a city, the city of God where peace and love shone forth: *The desert, dreadful by reason of its desolation, became for them a city of asylum. Herein they are preserved from harm. Desolation abandoned in the desert, since therein the children of the Kingdom dwell. It became in truth a great city, through the sound of the psalmsinging of their mouths....*[65] According to John Chrysostom, the desert was a city of virtue: *And where shall we find this humility? Will ye that we go again to the city of virtue, the tents of holy men, the mountains....*[66]

The hermits were protestors against the corruption of society who wished to found an alternative, Christian society in the desert, based solely on the word of God. The silence and emptiness of the desert were a true challenge to the noise and sin of society. In the midst of this physical emptiness, the hermits wanted to construct a life in God. Before the rise of eremitism the desert was often regarded as a place fit for sinners: *I beg of thee, thou Apostle of the new God,*

62 Stoop, *Alexander*, 31-33.

63 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 147-148; Brown, *World of Late Antiquity*, 60-68.

64 'The desert of Syria was never true desert. In the steppe-lands of of Chalcis, occasional showers ensured that water was always near the surface; the ruins of deserted Roman forts trapped enough to support a hermit all the year round. The mountains had the same quality.... The desert was a standing challenge on the very edge of the village....', Brown, *Society and the Holy*, 111.

65 Beck, *Sermones* IV, 157-161; tr. 474.

66 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXXII, 3; tr. 438.

who hast come to a desert place from the habitation of men--for we dwell in a desert, because we live like the beasts[67] *that have no speech, and now, lo, we are being tamed by thy hands....*[68] In the view of Theophilus of Antioch, heretics inhabited a place that was similar to the desert.[69] The *Didascalia* confirms that the term 'desert' was formerly associated with those who were not God's people: *the churches formerly were 'deserts'*.[70] All Christians, that is, were previously sinners and the word 'desert' became almost a synonym for those who had sinned. For the hermits, then, the desert was not only the antithesis of the city, it was also a habitat suitable for sinners, the dwelling place of *wild beasts*. They chose it for their life of mortification because they conceived themselves as stained with sin. According to the *Didascalia* a sinner must isolate himself from the Christian community to be healed.[71] The hermits interpreted this need for 'isolation' in a radical and literal way, as indeed they interpreted many aspects of Christianity. They went to the desert to achieve a perfect isolation. We can say, therefore, that for the early Syrian hermits the desert had three basic meanings: 1) Physically and spiritually it was a place of total emptiness and silence which could assist the Christian to a greater unity with God. Hence it could thus become the nucleus of a new city of God, where love and peace might flourish. 2) It represented the antithesis of the sinful city, where the man of God could find freedom and joy with God. 3) The desert was the habitat of sinners, especially heretics. Here they were *chastised by God* and condemned to live in a *waterless place*. Yet they could also keep a distance between themselves and their persecutors. Although the hermits could have been motivated by any or all of these interpretations, the first appears to have been dominant. One must note, however, that the Syrian hermits did not completely reject society. Once spiritual maturity was achieved they set up missions for preaching and spreading the word of God, thereby hoping to turn sinful society to holiness.

7. POVERTY - RICHNESS

The hermit was utterly poor because he gave up everything to follow his master, Jesus Christ: *They possess kindred and family, houses, wealth, and property, but they deemed it all as naught, so as to gain the Kingdom above.... None among them thinks upon Mammon, since their treasure is in heaven. Among them is no thought of possessions, since their hope is only Paradise. None among them goes to court with his fellow, since they possess nothing in this world.... They do not lay upon their bodies the burden of love for the world*

67 Comparing men with beasts was a common way of referring to sinners.
68 *Acts of Thomas*, 87; tr. 110; cf. *ibid.* 32, 70.
69 Cf. Theophilus of Antioch, II, 14; cf. *Didascalia*, XXVI, 257.
70 *Didascalia*, XXVI, 241; tr. 223; cf. *ibid.* II, 18.
71 Cf. *Didascalia*, 72, 85, 221-222.

and its possesions; and they do not permit their will to be choked by Mammon. They reckon gold as dung and riches as naught at all.[72] John Chrysostom depicted the hermit as one who possessed nothing in the world besides a single garment: *But the monks, poor as they were, having nothing more than a mean garment, who had lived in the coarsest manner, who seemed formerly to be nobodies, men habituated to mountains and forests....*[73] Christians who wished to join the eremitic life did not hestitate to renounce all worldly ties, objects, and desires, including their own past lives.[74] In addition, a hermit rejected every kind of gift; he would not accept a gift even if he felt the need of it.[75] Aphrahat *never accepted anything from anyone, neither bread nor prepared food nor clothing, but a single one of his friends supplied him with bread.*[76] And, Zeno *had neither bed nor lamp nor hearth nor jar nor flask nor chest nor book nor anything else, but he used to wear old rags and likewise shoes that needed straps, since the pieces of leather had come apart.*[77] Romanus *called himself a pauper and beggar,*[78] and Polychoronius counted *poverty more desirable than every kingdom.*[79]

Alexander the Sleepless carried out a radical reform in early Syrian coenobitism, comparable with that effected by Francis of Assisi in medieval Western monasticism. In Alexander's view, a hermit who sought to be a perfect Christian must follow nothing except the words of Jesus Christ. Thus, a hermit or a Christian should own nothing and should remain totally poor because material resources are an impediment to the ideal of poverty as it is described in the Gospel: *Up to now* (Alexander speaks) *you have been partaking of milk. But if anyone wants to partake of solid food and desires to become a perfect Christian, let him sell his possessions and give to the poor, and take no thought for the morrow, and he shall have treasure in heaven. But let him seek the Kingdom of Heaven and the righteousness of God, as it is written, and all these things will be added unto him in addition.*[80]

The *Rules* of Rabbula warn monks against any transgression of their vow of poverty: *- The monks shall not possess the goods of sheep and of goats or of houses and mules, or of other animals, except one donkey (for those) who need it, or one yoke of oxen (for those) who seed (the field). - No one of these brothers*

72 Beck, *Sermones* IV, 58-137; tr. 472-473.
73 Chrysostom, *Stat.* XVII, 5; tr. 454.
74 Cf. *HR*, III, 2; XII, 1, 7; VIII, 1; Jerome, *Malchus*, 315-316, 3; *Syriac Life*, 516-517.
75 Cf. *HR*, III, 14; VIII, 4; XXIV, 9.
76 *HR*, VIII, 3; tr. 73.
77 *HR*, XII, 2; tr. 96.
78 *HR*, XI, 4; tr. 95.
79 *HR*, XXIV, 9; tr. 158.
80 Cf. *Mt.* 6, 24-34; Stoop, *Alexander*, 18.

who are in the monasteries shall possess anything privately for himself besides that which belongs to the community of brothers and is under the authority of the rišdaira (superior).[81] On account of their extreme poverty, Rabbula asks other Christians to take care of the hermits' bodily needs: *The priests and deacons shall take charge of the monks that are in their territories; they shall take care of them as of their (own) members; and shall also excite the lay-people in order that they may share in their bodily (needs).*[82] Poverty should be the lot of all Christians whose treasure lies in heaven. This applied, above all, to the hermit. If he remained poor in earthly things, he would become rich in spririt.[83] Thus, hermit was a Christian in search of fine pearls,[84] a search which, according the *Odes of Solomon*, is the obligation of all Christians: *Become rich in God i Father, and receive the mind of the Most High: Be strong, and be delivered i. his grace.*[85]

The *Didascalia* warns against Mammon and earthly riches which lead one to deviate from the Lord's path, darkening and corrupting human nature: *Indeed, everyone who has some property, and does not give to others, nor makes use of it himself, lays up for himself a perishable treasure on earth; and he has inherited the place of the serpent who lays upon the treasure,*[86] *and will cause a danger that he will be reckoned with him....*[87] The *Didascalia* adds that only those who are free from the slavery of Mammon can be chosen for the service of the altar: *And the apostles constituted that those who divest themselves from mammon and do not run after the gain of money shall be chosen and brought to the ministry of the altar.*[88] The *Acts of Thomas* remains the most important source concerning the question of poverty prior to the rise of Syrian eremitism. It requires all followers of Jesus Christ to maintain strict poverty in all earthly things: *Not gold, nor silver, nor riches, nor possessions, nor goods, nor clothes nor anything at all of these earthly things that are of this world, and come from it and return to it, do we seek.*[89]

81 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 29 (9, 12).

82 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 40 (15).

83 *Abraham Qidunaya*, III, 4; V, 3-4; VI, 9ff; XIV; *Julian Saba*, I, 14; VIII, 15ff; XIII, 15; 300ff.; *Liber Graduum*, 825-829; Macarius, *Homilies*, III, 1; XVIII; Beck, *Sermones* IV, II, 10ff; *HR*, IX, 1; Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXVIII, 4; LXXII, 3.

84 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 512; *Mt.* 13, 45; *Acts of Thomas*, 108-113.

85 *Odes of Solomon*, IX, 5; tr. 699; XI, 9; LI, 10.

86 This comparison also appears in the *Hymn of the Pearl* in the *Acts of Thomas*, 109-110: 'I went straight to the serpent, I dwelt around his abode, (waiting) till he should slumber and sleep....'

87 *Didascalia*, XVII, 178; tr. 162.

88 *Didascalia*, III, 47 (20); tr. 40; *Didache* takes a similar view, cf. *Didache*, 3, 5; 11, 6; 12; 15, 1. For more details see *Didascalia*, III, 27-28; 36-37; IV, 54; XV, 163; XVIII.

89 *Acts of Thomas*, 53; tr. 93; cf. *Ibid.* 60, 62, 99, 100, 114-116, 136, 143, 144.

8. PROVIDENCE - HOPE

The hermit was extremely poor because *he has heard that saying: 'Take ye no thought for the morrow'.*[90] God, who cares for the needs of all His creatures, provided for the hermits in all their physical needs and filled them with grace.[91] Accordingly, a hermit saw God's providence in all creation and believed that everything was governed by it.[92] Many people wanted to test the faith of Alexander Akoimetos who believed that Christians should not care for the morrow but trust in God to provide. They went with him to the desert without food to see whether the word of God would become true: *They journeyed all day, and at about the eleventh hour they halted between two mountains. Rabbula looked round at the roads and laughed. But the blessed Alexander hastened to his prayers, as was his custom; and when they had completed the evening hymn together, the Lord acted according to the faith of the noble athlete of Christ. For Christ the Master sent His angel in the form of a peasant who had his beast laden with pure warm bread, and two cooking pots hung on either side of the animal containing vegetables and lentils. Then the blessed Alexander said to Rabbula, 'Get up, receive it, and do not be faithless but believing'*[93] *But he remained speechless for a long time, wondering and saying to himself, 'How did this come to appear in this desolate spot? Where could a peasant have got so many loaves, and such loaves? We travelled all day, and have only just reached this spot. Likewise he must have left at night so as to arrive at this time. So the bread cannot have been made today. But then how does it come to be warm?' And thinking all this, he marvelled at the power of Christ. He asked the man who had come, 'Where do you come from, and who sent you here?' The angel of God replied, 'My Master sent me'. So they accepted the food, and sent the supposed peasant away. And when he had gone a little way from them, he suddenly disappeared.*[94]

On another occasion some other people wanted to test Alexander's confidence in God's providence which provides everything for its servants who pray and glorify the Lord on earth: *Certain unbelieving men tried to test the grace of God, and they stayed with the brothers night and day, wanting to see where the servants of God got their food from. For they saw that the day's food was found ready without fail, and the brothers took what they needed and what was left over was given to the poor, and no thought was given for the morrow. The blessed one* (Alexander) *knew in the Spirit what they were thinking, and he*

90 Beck, *Sermones* IV, II, 241; tr. 475; cf. *Mt.* 6, 34.
91 Cf. Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LV, 7; Beck, *Sermones* IV, II, 109.
92 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 631.
93 Cf. *Jn.* 20, 27.
94 Stoop, *Alexander*, 19.

said to his attendant monk, when there was no one knocking at the door, 'Go out and receive what has been sent by the Master'. Before he got near the door, a man dressed in white came and knocked hard. When the brother opened the door, he found a basket brimming with pure, warm bread, but could not see the man who had knocked. For it was an angel of God who had produced the man with the loaves and then gone away. So the brother asked the man who had come, 'Who sent you here?' He replied, 'I was taking the loaves out of the oven and a very large man dressed in white appeared before me and put terrible pressure on me, saying, 'Take all the loaves to the servants of the Most High'. And as I did not know the place, he made me follow him as far as here. He wc the man who knocked at the door, and now he has disappeared'.

When the brother heard this, he made it known to the blessed abbot. T brothers were already seated at their tables, and the holy Alexander took t. warm bread and set it before them; and they partook with thankfulness, ana gave the remains to their brothers the poor. And they were amazed at the man's great boldness because, in accordance with Scripture, he had no care for the morrow. Wanting to confirm the brothers in their faith, he called the visitor into their midst and made them hear everything from his own mouth. Thus the souls of the brothers were bound to him with fear and love. And he did not do this from a desire to glorify himself; but because they were going to embark on a struggle, he trained them first and confirmed their souls in faith, lest they should come into the middle of the arena and faint through lack of faith.[95] *The hermits' hope was always with the Lord*[96] *and in this hope they performed their labours.*[97]

9. CONCLUSION

The hermit's decision to renounce the world was a choice for God against the Evil One. The hermit who sought a perfect life in God could not avoid choosing between the sinful world and the heavenly world, between the society of man and that of God. This choice, however, was the responsibility of all those who wished to follow Jesus Christ and attain His heavenly kingdom. Thus, Ignatius called on Christians to give up everything and to follow only Jesus Christ: *Let us be imitators of the Lord, and seek who may suffer the more wrong, be the more destitute, the more despised, that no plant of the devil may be found in you but that you may remain in all purity and sobriety in Jesus Christ, both in the flesh and in the spirit.*[98]

95 Stoop, *Alexander*, 45; cf. 35.
96 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 572.
97 Beck, *Sermones* IV, 320; tr. 476.
98 Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* X, 3; tr. 185. Cf. Theodoret, *HR*, XXXI, 17ff; *Thérap.* III, 92; Guillaumont, *Origines*, 32-33, 89-116; 191.

B. INITIATION AND INNER LIFE

No-one could embark upon an eremitic life without a basic initiation. This was indispensable for the correct practice of the life of mortification in the desert. The basic initiation was an ascetic school where the new hermit, or novice, gained the discipline necessary for the eremitic life.

1. THE MASTER AND THE DISCIPLE

The novice's first steps in the eremitic life were guided by a hermit who was advanced in age, experience, and wisdom. He is usually referred to as the master or superior of the community: *Their superior was Eusebius, who transmitted the teaching of the great Marcianus. The great Agapetus, when he had received the necessary training and exercise and learnt well this athletic skill, departed, as I said, and sowed the seeds he had received from that godly soul.*[99] The master's own training was a process of edification and spiritual learning.[100] Rightly so, because he had authority over everyone in his community, he gave orders and was the highest authority: *He* (Publius) *ordered each of those who assembled to live separately, while he continually inspected and examined the cells to prevent their containing something stored away in excess of need. They say that he even carried scales with which to examine closely the weight of the bread, and that if he found more than had been laid down, he was angry and called those who did this gluttons. He ordered them to expect satiety in neither their eating nor their drinking.... At night he would come to each door suddenly, and if he found someone awake and hymning God, he would depart again in silence.... This form of life has continued even till today: neither time, which is eager to change things of this kind, nor those who inherited this man's charge have been induced to change anything of the rules he laid down, and this although not two or three but many have become superior.*[101]

The Master had to admonish his disciples and warn them of the Devil who tried to snatch the hermit from his life of seclusion. Malchus' abbot fought against the Devil lurked within his disciple: *After many years it came over me* (Malchus) *to return to my country, and stay with my mother and cheer her widowhood.... My abbot began to cry out that it was a temptation of the devil, and that under fair pretexts some snare of the old enemy lay hid. It was, he declared, a case of the dog returning to his vomit.... When he failed to convince me he fell upon his knees and besought me not to forsake him, nor ruin myself by looking back after putting my hand to the plough....*[102] A spiritual master, or the

99 *HR*, III, 5; tr. 39; XVIII, 1.
100 Cf. *HR*, III, 11; IV, 3, 5; XVIII, 1.
101 *HR*, V, 3-6; tr. 59-60.
102 Jerome, *Malchus*, 316, 3.

superior of the hermits, was required to be humble, meek, peaceful, compassionate, wise, full of the spirit of discernment, and one who sought to serve God through his disciples whom he educated with love and wisdom.[103] He should remain constant and harmonious at all times: *During the entire cycle of a week that we spent with this man of God* (Eusebius of Teleda), *we saw his face remain without any change, not now relaxed and now contracted with sternness. Likewise his look was not at all times grim and cheerful at others, but his eyes always preserved the same orderliness; they were sufficient proof of the calm of his soul.*[104] Eusebius taught his disciples to cultivate peace within themselves; they should never become agitated by happiness or sadness, but stay constant through their faith. Only then could a disciple become a master, ready to educate others in the same manner.[105]

The master of an eremitic community was not chosen for his human qualit and values; he was a man who had conquered his passions and taken control his body, a man firm in his faith and adorned with all the divine virtues. He wa usually called to be a master by his own master or by another of that rank, though on occasion the hermits would nominate him for themselves.[106] He was required to provide an example of maturity in the eremitic life for his disciples[107] because *he is their father and their ruler.*[108]The disciple submitted himself to his master and obeyed him because the master was one who could lead the disciple to the new life in Christ.[109] The sources often describe the powerful influence of the master over his disciples: *They* (Moses and Damian) *are beholding the soul of the great Polychronius in another body; for there is the same simplicity, mildness, modesty, gentleness of speech, sweetness in company, alertness of soul, and apprehension of God, and the same standing labor, vigil, food, and poverty in accordance with the divine law--for apart from a little basket containing soaked lentils the cell contains nothing.*[110]

A monastic rule from the early period of Syrian asceticism required the hermit to reserve a special love and respect for his master: *Praise God who made you worthy of His (monastic) institution; and pray for your masters who have been wearied (by labor) because of you; and for your fathers who have brought you to the (monastic) instruction.*[111] A disciple was always taught to accept his

103 Cf. *HR*, II, 9, 10, 16; IV, 5, 8, 12; V, 7, 8; *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Lamy), 23-25.
104 *HR*, IV, 10; tr. 54.
105 Cf. *HR*, IV, 12f.
106 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 527-528.
107 Cf. *HR*, X, 2; XXIV, 2.
108 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXVIII, 3; tr. 418.
109 Cf. *HR*, II, 3, 6-7; IV, 9; V, 3f; VI, 7; IX, 4; X, 3; XXIV, 3f. *Syriac Life*, 531f; Jerome, *Malchus*, 317 (7); 318 (10).
110 *HR*, XXIV, 5; tr. 156; cf. *ibid.* II, 10.
111 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 22, 21.

master's word: *It is good for you that you are being educated in the fear of your masters; and become humble and chaste and disciplined, and do not become undisciplined.*[112] Yet, the relationship between Alexander the Sleepless (Akoimetos) and his superior shows another aspect of discipleship, which was marked by obedience to the superior and at the same time by rebellion against his teaching when it strayed from the Bible: *In four years he* (Alexander) *fulfilled this desire of his: he took time in the discipline of learning not because he was slow to learn, but in order to understand exactly what each verse was about. When after prayer and supplication he had been vouchsafed this knowledge, he could no longer bear to look upon anything corrrupt, in contravention of the commandment; but he suddenly took the holy Gospel, went to the abbot and asked, 'Father, is what is written in the Gospel true?' Elias, a true father and pastor of reason-endowed sheep, heard the enormity of the question and thought that the brother had been led astray by the evil one and lost his faith. He said nothing to the brother immediately, but fell on his face and beseeched the brothers to pray for this man who had been ensnared, so he said, by the devil. Two hours passed while all wept and prayed for him, and then the abbot stood up and said to Alexander, 'Brother, how has it come to you to think such things?' But he insisted, saying, 'Is what is in the holy Gospel true?' Hearing from everyone that it was true because these were the words of God, he rejoined, 'Then why do we not keep them?' They all said to him, 'Nobody can keep them'. Then, seized with an uncontrollable rage because he had lost everything over the past years and squandered [the time] in vain, he took leave of all the brothers and, taking the holy Gospel, went off to follow what was written and emulate our holy fathers. And for a while he emulated the prophet Elijah and went into the desert, and lived there for seven years, having no care for anything worldly. But he was truly guided by the Holy Spirit.*[113]

Later, Alexander showed a different relationship between a disciple and his master based mainly on independence, freedom and quick formation in the ascetic life. He soon converted people to the Christian faith and the ascetic life, also giving them the freedom to continue their eremitic life without him. Rabbula, one of his first disciples, went immediately after his conversion to the desert to join the eremitic life and he pleased his master in all his ascetic ways, especially when he became bishop of Edessa.[114] The story of the thirty thieves confirms the effectiveness of Alexander, for after the conversion of their chief, the whole band of thieves wanted to adopt the Christian faith and to lead an ascetic life. Soon after, Alexander left them alone and went to a different place: *Alexander went two days' journey into the desert and found a place inhabited by*

112 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 20, 9.

113 Stoop, *Alexander*, 8.

114 Cf. Stoop, *Alexander*, 20-23.

thieves, where there was a robber chief with thirty wicked men under him. There was no city or country area that escaped being defiled by the nefarious works of their hands. The blessed Alexander had heard about this from many people, and he besought God, asking Him to bring the souls of those wicked men to Him. Knowing that his intention was good, God granted him his petition. For he met the same robber chief and made known to him the word of truth. Filled with compunction by the blessed man's words and sincerely believing, he received the grace of holy baptism. After he had been vouchsafed the grace of holy baptism and come up out of the holy font, the blessed Alexander asked him, 'D: you ask for something as you came to the holy font?' 'Yes', he said. And ag he asked, 'What did you ask?' The other told him, 'I asked that the Lord wo soon receive my soul'. He lived for one week, repenting of his deeds, and on . eighth day the Lord took him. The thirty men with him saw this strange wonde and they too came to the blessed Alexander asking to be vouchsafed the gift of Christ. And believing sincerely in our Lord Jesus Christ, they also received holy baptism. Indeed, they took to their faith with such fervour that they made that house of thieves into a monastery and remained there serving the Lord with their whole heart, so that in a short time they were found dear in the sight of the Lord. When he saw that they were strong enough in their faith to be able to build up others, he appointed an abbot for them and strengthened them further in their faith; then he took leave of them and prayed over them, and went on his way rejoicing.[115]

Despite his haste to found monasteries and to preach the Kingdom of God to all people, Alexander was very patient with his disciples and tried to educate them with love, faith and prayer: *The blessed one* (Alexander) *was in the habit of sending the younger monks out on monastery business. It happened, then, that one of them fell into promiscuity in the city, using the resources provided by God the Master on the brothers' account. Knowing this in the Spirit, the blessed one went to meet him and reproached him in a cryptic fashion, saying to him just one word in the local language: 'Thief!' And he fell silent, wanting to see whether through this word he would turn to repentance and confess his sin. This was why he did not investigate the matter - lest the enemy of truth should destroy him through shame. But the brother did not clearly understand that the father knew his sin, but took his word as a joke and went on with what he was doing. The holy shepherd was mourning over him and beseeching God. And wanting to show him that he knew all about his previous sin, he took a reasonable pretext and punished him, banishing him from his sight. Again Satan hardened his heart, and he did not want to make amends. After three days he was touched with compunction and blamed himself, and decided to plead against his*

115 Stoop, *Alexander*, 24-25.

punishment. As the brother was thinking this to himself, the blessed one immediately knew it by the Spirit, and said to his attendant monk, 'Go and say to the brother: 'Since your heart is softened and you have repented, you are released from punishment'. When the brother heard this, he knew truly from the second sign that Alexander had been well aware of the first case too, and in tears he admitted to the first sin also. After that the brother was saved, following in the footsteps of his teacher.[116]

Not all hermits could become superiors, just as all Christians could not become disciples in the eremitic life. Only those who were capable of receiving initiation into the divine mysteries could comprehend the eremitic vocation and train in the school of seclusion.[117] The master taught the spirituality of his Church which was founded on the word of God. This role of the superior was not an eremitic invention but was based on earlier Syrian tradition. The *Didache* already asks the disciple to keep the words of his master in his heart because therein is the word of God: *My child, thou shalt remember, day and night, him who speaks the word of God to thee, and thou shalt honour him as the Lord, for where the Lord's nature is spoken of, there is he present. And thou shalt seek daily the presence of the saints, that thou mayest find rest in their words.*[118]

The *Didascalia* repeats the same instruction: *Thomas* (the Apostle) *said, My son, he who speaks to you the Word of God and is the cause of life unto you, and gives you the seal that is in Christ, love him as the apple of your eye. Indeed, remember him by night and by day, honor him moreover as of God, for where the Lordship is spoken of, there is the Lord. You shall then seek his face everyday, and the saints, those of rest, that you may refresh yourself through their words--for you being joined to the saints will be sanctified. Then shall you honor him as you are able by your sweat and by the labor of your hands. For if through him the Lord has deemed it worthy to give you spiritual food and water and everlasting life, so much the more must you offer him perishable and temporal food for the laborer deserves his wage....*[119] The *Acts of Thomas* confirms this spiritual tradition and describes Thomas as the master who was venerated by his followers because he gave them the life of Christ.[120]

2. OBEDIENCE

The hermit pledged obedience to God,[121] together with his master and those who reflected the image and will of God.[122] Obedience became an increasingly

116 Stoop, *Alexander*, 46.
117 Cf. *HR*, *Prol.* 10; IX, 1; XXVI, 1.
118 *Didache*, IV, 1-2; tr. 315.
119 *Didascalia*, III, 37; tr. 34.
120 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 2; 6, 7,; 11-12; 15; 29; 34-40; 45; 58; 68-70; 72; 78.
121 Cf. *HR*, I, 11; II, 11; VIII, 1; XXI, 23; Macarius, IV, 8.
122 Cf. *HR*, II, 4; III, 5, 9; IV, 5, 8; VIII, 12; XXVI, 5; *Antony Life*, 494 (4).

important ideal in early Syrian eremitism and rules were imposed on the hermits to ensure that they remained obedient to their eremitic vocation: - *Abraham was justified from his works. My brother, be vigilant in your true teaching which you receive from your teachers. - Nothing should be before your sight except a continuous obedience (lit. listening). - Be a good example to your brothers and companions; and present continual obedience in all matters and diligence on learning doctrine).*[123]

The Syriac word for obedience means listening, for obedience was closely related to listening and its acts were the result of what one heard. The Syria hermit was taught that his obedience was the direct outcome of his ability listen: if he listened to the word of God he would behave according to it, bu he listened to the Evil One he would act contrary to the will of Gc Accordingly, eremitic spirituality taught the Syrian hermits to mortify their owr volition and to open their ears to the Lord and to those who act according to His will. In this way they fortified themselves in the Spirit and radiated the glory of the Word of God which they heard daily.[124] According to the early Syrian Church, obedience to the word of God and of those who truly believe it and live according to it, is the only way to salvation.[125] For the hermit, as indeed for the ordinary Christian, the act of listening was a form of mortification; both were required to persist in the struggle to hear only the word of God which was present in their hearts and to obey its commands of love and peace.

3. SILENCE

Theodoret called the eremitic life *the silent life*,[126] because the hermit escaped the tumult of the sinful world to lead a life of peace and silence:[127] *And because they saw turmoil in the world, they made their love silent rest, lest the evil one even by a word should bring to naught their labours.*[128] John the Solitary considered silence to be a quality of the outer as well as the inner man. By its means all evil thoughts could be erased and the soul dominated by the Spirit who dwelt within: *Therefore, my brethren, let stillness be reckoned by you as greater than any other way of life. For by continual abiding in stillness the*

123 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 19, 1; 20, 5.

124 Cf. *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Beck), I, 6; XII, 18; *Julian Saba*, XVII, 20; XX, 20; *Liber Graduum*, 588ff; 900ff; *Syriac Life*, 620, 630; *Antony Life*, 493 (2); *HR*, XIII, 16; XXVI, 12.

125 Cf. *Didascalia*, I, 11; III, 51; IV, 58; XV, 158-166; XVI, 174; XX, 199; XXI, 209; XXIII, 224; XXVI, 247-248, 254-255, 264; Theophilus of Antioch, II, 25; *Odes of Solomon*, 8, 8-10; 9, 1-6; 15, 4; 16, 9; 31, 5; 33, 10; 37, 2; 38, 5; 42, 19; *Acts of Thomas*, 34; 36; 48; 70; 166; Tatian, 7; 13; 30; 32.

126 *HR*, XIX, 1.

127 Cf. Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXVIII, 3; LXX; *Tim.* XIV.

128 Beck, *Sermones* IV, II, 401; tr. 478.

wandering thoughts are mortified along with empty recollections and deadly passions, since continual abiding within itself makes the intellect stronger than anything else.[129] He goes on to explain the practice of stillness: *The stillness of the body is the restriction of the body from wandering about. The stillness of knowledge is for a man to make himself distant from uninstructed men and the sight of many persons, and continually to abide in this knowledge alone.... It is impossible for us not to be enslaved to them as long as we are found in their proximity. Therefore, withdrawal and stillness, more than anything else, are needed for our life.*[130]

John the Solitary became extremely firm and precise in his understanding of the eremitic vocation: *But to put it concisely: the entire discipline of knowledge*[131] *is accomplished through withdrawal and stillness. Without these two a man will not be able to see himself. Indeed, this is the true foundation of the entire edifice of the worlds of knowledge and all other good disciplines; by stillness all the virtues are accomplished.*[132] According to John the Solitary, silence was the true name and identity of the eremitic vocation.[133] Reclusive withdrawal and silence thus became synonymous; one cannot be truly silent without withdrawing into oneself completely.[134] In eremitic Syrian literature, then, the recluse and the silent man is one who has withdrawn from the tumult of society, shutting out all sinful passions and desires in order to attain an ever greater unity with God.[135]Silence was an eremitic requirement because the hermit was not yet a sufficiently pure and true disciple of Christ to speak of the world of God.

The silence of the hermits was a Church tradition that went back to the time of Ignatius of Antioch: *It is better to be silent and be real, than to talk and to be unreal. Teaching is good, if the teacher does what he says. There is then one teacher who 'spoke and it came to pass', and what he has done even in silence is worthy of the Father. He who has the word of Jesus for a true possession can also hear his silence, that he may be perfect, that he may act through his speech, and be understood through his silence.*[136] According to Ignatius, the mysteries of God are written in His silence.[137] For him, silence was the distinguishing

129 John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 462ff.
130 John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 462ff.
131 For John, the discipline of knowledge includes eremitism.
132 John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 463.
133 John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 464-466.
134 John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 463f.
135 Cf. *HR*, IV, 3-4; XIX, 1-3; XX, 2; XXI, 32; XXV, 2; XXVI, 5-9; XXVII, 1-2; XXVIII, 3-4; II, 4-6, 16; III, 12; VI, 1, 7; VIII, 7; XII, 2; Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 474ff; Chrysostom, *Mt.* LXVIII, 3; LXX; *Tim.* XIV; *Liber Graduum*, 900 (8-10).
136 Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* XV, 1-2; tr. 189.
137 Cf. *Eph.* XIX, 1; *Mag.* VIII, 2.

feature of the bishop, who relied more upon silence than on words.[138] In the *Didascalia*, silence and separation from the Christian community (seclusion) denote the sinner who is not allowed to speak on account of his sins: *'Have you sinned? Be silent: your repentance shall be with you, and you shall have power over it'.*[139] *To Miriam the sister of Moses also, when she had spoken against Moses and afterwards repented and was esteemed worthy of forgiveness, it was said by the Lord: 'If her father had but spit in her face, it were right for her to be ashamed and to be separated seven days without the camp, and then to come in'.*[140] *Likewise it also is required of you* (the bishop) *to do: to put out of th Church those who promise to repent of their sins as is right for tl transgressions--and afterwards receive them as merciful fathers.*[141]

One may compare James of Cyrrhestica who left society and withdrew t silent life in the mountains, to repent of his sins: *I myself* (Theodoret) *have had discussion with him* (James) *on this matter. I told him that some people were upset at being driven away without even a blessing. 'It would be proper,' I said, 'for those who come for this and make a journey of many days to depart not in vexation but full of joy, to feast the ignorant with stories of your philosophy.' He replied, 'I did not come to the mountain for another's sake but for my own. Bearing the wounds of so many sins, I need much treatment, and because of this I beseech our Master to give me the antidotes to wickedness. How, then, would it not be absurd and utterly senseless to break the sequence of petition and make conversation with men in between?'*[142]

The *Didascalia* states that those who are in mourning *do not speak, but sit in sadness*, because of their sins.[143] In the *Acts of Thomas*, silence is a strong mark of divine wisdom, which makes God and His servants to speak in their silence, without losing its sense that it is also the mark of repentant sinners who cannot speak because of their impurity.[144]In early Syrian eremitism silence and reclusive withdrawal acquired at least two main meanings: - As a mark of divine wisdom. God himself is silence, for He is always in Himself, and His servants are in His image. - Men are required to become silent and reclusive to calm the passions and desires instilled in them by the sinful world. When human nature is purified of its sins, silence becomes divine. At that moment the hermit is united with God.

138 Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* VI, 1; *Phil.* 1,1.
139 *Gen.* 4, 7.
140 *Num.* 12, 14.
141 *Didascalia*, VI, 72-73; tr. 65.
142 *HR*, XXI, 33; tr. 146.
143 *Didascalia*, XXI, 216; tr. 201.
144 *Acts of Thomas*, 39, 80.

4. PRAYER AND SACRAMENTS

Prayer was the hermits' main occupation and the backbone of their ascetic ilfe in the desert. Prayer was divided into three kinds: the Divine Office, silent prayer, and personal practices.

a. The Divine Office

Perform prayer in the morning and at the third hour, and at the sixth hour, and at the ninth hour, and in the evening, and when you go to sleep, and at compline, and at the cock crow. In the morning namely, thanking God who has given us life, having made the night to pass and brought the day; at the third hour because at it our Lord received the judgement from Pilate. In that of the ixth hour because in it Christ was crucified, all creatures were shaken, rembling at the audacity which the wicked Jews did: he was pierced in his side by a spear, and shed forth blood and water; in that of the ninth hour because when our Lord was crucified the sun was darkened in the midst of the noon, and the dead arose from their graves; and creatures could not bear to see the shame of our Lord; also He delivered over His spirit into the hands of His Father; in that of the evening, however, thanking God who gave us the night for the rest from the toils of the day; but in that at the compline while you now slumber the sleep of rest from work; but pray that in sleep and in rest you may not leave this world; and if that should happen, the prayer which you have prayed will help you in the way that is everlasting; and at Cock Crow, because that is the hour which announces to us the coming of the day, and for the service of the works of light.[145]

This structure of daily prayer, outlined in the *Didascalia*, represents the practice of the early Syrian Church, as well as that of the hermits who prayed according to the rule of their Church. Alexander the Sleepless (Akoimetos) and his disciples followed this routine, adding a nocturnal prayer at midnight in the belief that a hermit should pray day and night, unceasingly like the angels. In addition, he divided his community into fourteen choirs, seven for the day and seven for the night, to guarantee the continuous succession of prayer: *These were the things he* (Alexander) *thought of while he was living in the wine jar.*[146] *Gradually, over twenty years, there gathered around him 400 men who, because of his fine and blameless life, were eager themselves to be united with Christ, convinced by him to attain the Kingdom of Heaven. They formed four linguistic groups in all: Romans, Greeks, Syrian and Copts. He established a monastery and divided them into eight choirs to sing and chant to God with zeal and understanding. He divided the order of service and the worship into twelve parts, in accordance with the prayer he had used while he was in the wine jar....*

145 *Didascalia*, III, 40; tr. 36.

146 See the story of the wine jar in this book pp.....(Jacob/Imitation of the Prophets).

The servant of God Alexander paid precise attention to what was written in the divinely-inspired Scriptures, and strove that not one tittle of God's commandments should escape him, but that he should imitate all the great men whose works have been written of. At first he took the Apostles' order of service for his rule of spiritual conduct, and performed the third, sixth and ninth hours and one night-time office. Then again he considered what he should ask of God; and he saw that God the Master always proclaims the number seven, as He says, 'Seven times a day I have praised Thee'[147] *He desired earnestly to bring this about, which he did, and performed prayers seven times a day and seven times a night. He spent seven years in this way, and again he wondered what he shou' ask; and he found that the prophet says, 'And on the law of the Lord he sh meditate day and night'.*[148] *He considered this, saying to himself, 'How is i possible?' And again he considered and said, 'Certainly, if it were not possib the Holy Spirit would not have given us this command through the prophet'....*

Once this mystery had been revealed to him, he looked for a rule that could accomplish this work. But seeing the weakness of our nature, he found himself at a loss. He searched the whole of the Old and New Testaments and looked at all the great men born at various times, but found no one who had achieved this wondrous work on earth and whom he could imitate so as to fulfil his good intention for the salvation of many souls. So he took as his teacher the Maker of all; and as He had marked divisions in creation, so Alexander arranged his life, saying, 'My Christ revealed in creation twenty-four hours of the night and day; so let us spend the course of the day and night in twenty-four services, singing in praise of God. Our Saviour commands us to forgive our fellow-servants their sins against us unto seventy times seven; so let us make seventy-seven prostrations in respect of these as we send up our prayers to our good God. My Master caused the day and night to increase in an orderly manner; in the same kind of ordered manner, let us unceasingly bring our hymns of praise to Him. Even on earth, the angels glorified my Saviour; so let us glorify Him with the angels'. And he arranged that every office should be performed, all the readings should be preserved and all the services should take place, and in addition seventy times seven times, night and day, the hymnody of the angels, which is, 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill among men'.[149]

It is quite clear from the life of Alexander that in every monastery he founded he imposed the same rule of the unceasing singing of the divine office: *When he* (Alexander) *went away, twenty-four of the brothers followed him as soldiers of Christ, bearing the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation and*

147 *Ps.* 118, 164.
148 *Ps.* 1, 2.
149 Stoop, *Alexander*, 27-30.

the sword of the Spirit, and asking that through him they might be brought blameless to Christ. Seeing the brothers' great eagerness and their zeal and their faith and pondering what this might be, the blessed one understood through the Holy Spirit that he was called to a contest in those parts. He was renewed in mind as he prepared himself, and prayed to Christ that His will might be done in him as soon as possible. God who loves mankind was swift to hear his prayer. While he stayed near the house of the holy martyr Menas, there gathered around him noble athletes of Christ from all the local monasteries, men healthy in mind, belonging to three races: Romans, Greeks and Syrians, three hundred in all. He divided them into six choirs to perform unceasing hymnody. He taught them all poverty, and ordered everything according to his original rule. Within a few days he showed his monks to be adorned with every virtue, and taught them the fundamentals of their struggle. He set people in charge of companies of fifty and ten, according to the rule; and at every hour they persevered in singing in praise of God.[150]

Apparently, the midnight prayer was practised by all the hermits and it became a strict rule of the monastic movement in the Syrian Church: *The monks shall not, under the pretext of occupation and work, fail the times that are appointed for the worship--service day and night.*[151] The *Homily on the Solitaries*, attributed to Ephrem, praises the hermits who fought against sin through their daily liturgy: *Likewise Mammon does not restrain those men from the hour of their liturgy, nor do cares hinder them from the hour of their prayer.... They tarry long in their liturgy of prayer, and for the liturgy they rise early. Throughout the day and all the night their work is naught but liturgy.*[152] In Syriac literature the liturgy of the hour is expressed by the word 'service' and in eremitic spirituality the term was used in connection with hermits who were fully and continuously occupied with God through their prayer.[153] In his life of Symeon the Stylite, Antony relates that the performance of the daily office was an important condition for a hermit's acceptance into the eremitic life.[154] Eusebius also taught his disciples to perform the daily office faithfully and at the proper times, *he charged them to have intercourse with God continually and leave no oportunity free from this activity, but to perform the appointed offices*[155] *in common....*[156] Publius, whose community was a mixture of Syriac-

150 Stoop, *Alexander*, 43.

151 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 30 (16).

152 Beck, *Sermones* IV, 22-24; tr. 476.

153 Cf. *Liber Graduum*, 885, 932; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 307.

154 Le vieillard lui dit: 'Enfant, c'est quand, sans interruption, on veille au soin de Dieu, et qu'on s'acquitte convenablement envers lui de toutes les prières, c'est-à-dire d'une prière à la troisième heure, pareillement à la sixième, la neuvième et la douzième, et de tout ce qui vient ensuite, comme on le fait dans les monastères', *Antony Life*, 493 (3).

155 Canivet, *Histoire* I, 301, comments on this word: 'L'expression est technique pour dire les

and Greek-speaking people from Syria, performed the liturgy in two languages simultaneously: *While those of the same tongue trained and strove in this way and hymned God in the Greek language, desire for this same way of life also seized those who used the local language.*[157] *Some came together and begged to join the flock and gain a share in his sacred teaching. He accepted the request.... By the first dwelling he built a further one and told them to live there; and he constructed a Church of God, in which he told both groups to assemble at the beginning and close of the day, in order to offer the evening and morning hymnody to God; this they were to do divided into two and each using their own language, while sending up their song in turn.*[158]

One may also compare the case of Eusebius, who *set up his original asc cell in the east, off shoots of his philosophy are to be seen in the west and south, like stars in a choir round the moon, hymning the Creator, some in Gree others in the local language.*[159] Yet, the individualistic character of Syrian eremitism meant that no general rule was followed by every hermit in respect of his office. The daily prayer varied from hermit to hermit. Some communities imposed a strict rule, according to which the daily office was performed at appointed times; others prayed communally in the mornings and in the evenings, while each hermit performed the rest of the office privately in his cell.[160] The hermit, however, spent his whole life in prayer and the daily office was only a part of his practice.

différentes heures de l'office et sans doute la célébration eucharistique....' I do not believe, however, that the eucharistic celebration was much performed by the hermits, though there is little evidence on this point.

156 *HR*, IV, 5; tr. 51.

157 I.e. Syriac.

158 *HR*, V, 5; tr. 60.

159 *HR*, IV, 13, tr. 56. Hendriks, 'Les Monastères internationaux', 181-182, believes that the monasteries of Alexander the Sleepless must have been bilingual because of their multinational character. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 154 says that such bilingual monasteries also existed in Palestine. Peeters, *Tréfonds orientale*, 86-87, believes that the art of singing the liturgy in two choirs was originally a Persian practice.

160 Cf. *HR*, III, 12; IV, 12-13; VI, 9; X, 2-3; XVIII, 2; XXI, 25; XXVI, 9, 26; XXXI, 1; Chrysostom, *Mt.* LV, 6-8; LXVIII, 3-4; *Tim.* XIV. 'This situation in the monasteries must have exhibited a great variety. The little we learn about the time of the prayer-hours comes from casual remarks which do not present a complete picture. In the community of Juliana Saba the monks gathered for a common evening-service, 'hymnody'.... A reference to the 'ninth hour' called 'liturgy', appears in the story of Marqianos.... We learn a little more through the story of Publios. He established a chapel for his bilingual community. This became the place where both communities, while living separately, met for the morning and evening-service, called 'hymnody'....', Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 287.

b. Conversation with God--Silent Prayer

Conversation with God was the most important part of the hermit's life. His relationship with God was a privileged one, characterised by a special intimacy. I avoid the terms contemplation[161] and meditation[162] because they do not express the true nature of the Syrian hermits' individual silent prayer. In Syriac, the word *hegyana*, was reserved for such prayer; in eremitic literature this signifies an inner, spiritual conversation between the hermit and God, who dwells in his heart, teaching him divine wisdom and assisting his growth in the Spirit.[163] It is a form of silent and spiritual learning in the school of God. Theodoret says: *At sunset* (Symeon the Stylite) *begins his converse from then on with God.*[164] Chrysostom confirms that all hermits conversed with God and his creation: *Here already they meditate upon the things of the kingdom, holding converse with groves, and mountains, and springs, and with great quietness, and solitude, and before all these with God.*[165]

Macedonius defined his eremitic vocation as a continuous search to behold his beloved one: *I too am hunting my God. I yearn to catch him, I long to behold him, and I shall not give up this noble hunt.*[166] This description would appear to apply to anyone who pursued the eremitic life: *others, embracing the solitary life, practising conversation with God alone and receiving no human consolation, enjoying this way proclamation as victors.*[167] John the Solitary defines silent prayer as the best prayer, because *spiritual prayer is more interior than the tongue, more deeply interiorized than anything on the lips, more interiorized than any words, and beyond vocal song. When someone prays this kind of prayer he has sunk deeper than all speech, and he stands where spiritual beings and angels are to be found; like them, he utters 'holy' without any words. But if he cease from this kind of prayer and re-commence the prayer of vocal song, then he is outside the region of the angels and he becomes an ordinary*

161 'Contemplation: The action of beholding, or looking at with attention and thought. The action of contemplating or mentally viewing; the action of thinking about a thing continuously; attentive consideration, study', *Oxford English Dictionary*, 893.

162 'Meditation: the action, or an act, of meditating; continuous thought or musing upon one subject or series of subjects; serious and sustained reflection or mental contemplation. In religious use: that kind of private devotional exercise which consists in the continuous application of the mind to the contemplation of some religious truth, mystery, or object of reverence, in order that the soul may increase in love of God and holiness of life. A discourse, written or spoken, in which a subject (usually religious) is treated in a meditative manner, or which is designed to guide the reader or hearer in meditation', *Oxford English Dictionary*, 298.

163 Cf. John the Solitary, V, 233; XI, 172.

164 *HR*, XXVI, 26; tr. 171.

165 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXVIII, 3; tr. 417.

166 *HR*, XIII, 6; tr. 102.

167 *HR*, XVII, 1; tr. 177.

man again.[168] For John the Solitary, God is silence and should be worshipped in silence; he goes on to define what he understands by spiritual silence in prayer: *There is silence of the tongue, there is silence of the whole body, there is the silence of the soul, there is the silence of the intellect, and there is the silence of the spirit. The silence of the tongue is merely when it is not incited to evil speech; the silence of the entire body is when all its senses are inactive; the silence of the soul is when there are no ugly thoughts bursting forth within it; the silence of the intellect is when it is not reflecting on any harmful knowledge or wisdom; the silence of the spirit is when the intellect ceases even from stirrings caused by created spiritual beings and all its movements are stirred solely by t Existent One, at the wondrous awe of the silence which surrounds Him.*[169]

One may assume that in the eremitic life true prayer is performed only those who are completely immersed in the silence of God; those who pray God using the tongue are still imperfect: *These are the degrees and measures to be found in speech and silence. But if you have not reached these and find yourself still far away from them, remain where you are and sing to God using the voice and the tongue in love and awe. Sing with application, toil in your service until you arrive at love.*[170] The hermit and God are not strangers to each another; rather, the intimate nature of their love makes them extremely familiar,[171] while a silent vision, eternally present, turns the hermit's prayer into a consecrated act of silence through which he is enriched in divine wisdom.[172]

Ignatius of Antioch asked Polycarp to *pray that the invisible things may be revealed to (him), that (he) may lack nothing and abound in every gift.*[173] The *Odes of Solomon* call for a continuous meditation on the love of God: *And let our faces shine in his light, And let our hearts meditate*[174] *in his love, By night and by day: Let us exult on account of the exultation of the Lord.*[175] Similarly, the *Didascalia* requires Christians to be in a state of constant conversation,[176] to contemplate the word of God day and night.[177] One cannot doubt that silent prayer, or conversation with God, was the most important element in the hermit's life; it was the consummation of his love for God.

168 John the Solitary, *On Prayer*, 466-467.
169 John the Solitary, *On Prayer*, 466-467.
170 John the Solitary, *On Prayer*, 466-467.
171 Cf. *HR*, I, 3; II, 2-4; III, 2; V, 7; VI, 1.
172 Cf. *HR*, II, 4; III, 2; VI, 12; IX, 2; XII, 2; XIII, 6; XV, 1; XVIII, 2; XXI, 3, 25, 32, 34; XXIV, 3; XXVI, 10, 12; XXVII, 1, 4; XXIX, 6-7; XXX, 2; *Thérap.* III, 16, 92-94; Macarius, *Homilies*, VIII, 3; XXXI, 2, 5.
173 Ignatius, *Poly.* 2, 2; tr. 271.
174 The verb of *hegyana* is used.
175 *Odes of Solomon*, 41, 6-7, tr. 729.
176 The verb of *hegyana* is also used.
177 Cf. *Didascalia*, XXVI, 248; II, 17.

c. Prostration and Intercession

Symeon the Stylite was a pioneer of prostration in early Syrian eremitism: *More than all this I* (Theodoret) *myself admire his* (Symeon's) *endurance. Night and day he is standing within view of all; for having removed the doors and demolished a sizeable part of the enclosing wall, he is exposed to all as a new extraordinary spectacle--now standing for a long time, and now bending down repeatedly and offering worship to God. Many of those standing by count the number of these acts of worship. Once one of those with me counted one thousand two hundred and forty-four of them, before slackening and giving up count. In bending down he always makes his forehead touch his toes--for his stomach's receiving food once a week, and little of it, enables his back to bend easily.*[178] It would seem that prostration was required of every hermit,[179] and was, in itself, an act of repentance.[180]

During prostration the hermits prayed for their sins and for the world; they believed that by their prayers they could preserve the world from sin: *Their prayers like offerings that are raised up give pleasure at every hour to the Godhead. Though all men dread the desert, it is become for them a mighty refuge. And from their bones now flow forth succour for all creation. The inhabited lands, where injustice rules, is by their prayers upheld. And the world, buried in sin, is by their prayers preserved. And the earth, which is shaken by controversies, by their prayers is supported. And the land, which is troubled by vain enquiries, the vigils of these men fill with calm.*[181]

Alexander Akoimetos introduced to the liturgy of the daily prayer of his monks seventy-seven prostrations in order to ask forgiveness for the sinners: *Our Saviour commands us to forgive our fellow-servants their sins against us unto seventy times seven; so let us make seventy-seven prostrations in respect of these as we send up our prayers to our good God.*[182] The hermit believed that, on the day of judgement, God will not only demand of him his own life and all his deeds, but the whole creation which should be pure, as it was in the beginning. Consequently, he did not pray for his sins alone, he prayed for the sins of the whole world. The hermit prayed that everything might be accomplished according to God's will.[183]

178 *HR*, XXVI, 22; tr. 170; cf. *Syriac Life*, 516; 539.

179 Cf. Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 479; Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXVIII, 3; Theodoret, *HR*, II, 5, 18; IV, 5. 12; VI, 12; IX, 10; XXVI, 3.

180 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 290-291; Spidlik, *Spiritualité de l'Orient*, 190.

181 Beck, *Sermones IV*, II, 494-506; tr. 479.

182 Stoop, *Alexander*, 30.

183 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 633; Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 22 (21); Ephrem, *Nisibene Hymns*, XIV, 25-26; Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXVIII, 3, LXXII, 4; *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Lamy), 25-26; Theodoret, *HR*, I, 1, 3; VI, 14; VIII, 5; XII, 4; XV, 6.

d. Eucharist

In its attitude towards the Eucharist, early Syrian eremitism was apparently in conflict with the rest of the early Syrian tradition.[184] Whereas the rest of the early Syrian tradition saw it as central for every Christian, for the hermits the Eucharist does not seem to have been a primary concern. For a long time Maris was so isoltated by his eremitic life that he was unable to take part in a Eucharistic celebration: *Having desired for a long time to witness a celebration of the spiritual and mystical sacrifice, he asked for the offering of the divine gift to be made there. I* (Theodoret of Cyrrhus) *consented gladly. Bidding the divine vessels be brought--the place was not distant--and using the hands of deacons c an altar,*[185] *I offered the divine and saving sacrifice. He was filled with eve spiritual joy and thought he was seeing heaven, and said that he had ne experienced such delight.*[186] At the beginning of his eremitic vocation, Symeo the Stylite was attached to the monastery of Telada. As usual, Symeon passed the forty days of Lent without eating anything, then, at the end of his fast, he received the Easter Eucharist from Bassus, the Abbot of his monastery: *At the end of the forty days, Bassus, this wonderful person and man of God, came and removed the mud; on going in through the door he found the complete number of rolls, he found the jar full of water, but Symeon stretched out without breath, unable either to speak or to move. Asking for a sponge to wet and rinse his mouth, he brought him the symbols of the divine mysteries* (the Eucharist)....[187]

On the other hand, Domnina went to Church regularly to pray with the Christians of her parish: *Going at cockcrow to the divine shrine nearby, she offers hymnody to the Master of the universe, together with the rest, both men and women. This she does not only at the beginning of the day but also at its close, thinking the place consecrated to God to be more venerable than every other spot and teaching others so.*[188] Zeno behaved in a similar manner, but only on Sundays: *Who could adequately express admiration for an old man* (Zeno) *who had completed forty years in asceticism, preserving at such a summit of philosophy and such modesty of spirit? What eulogy could one make consonant with such greatness? Having obtained such wealth of virtue, while living in the depth of poverty, he would come each Sunday to the Church of God together with the multitude--listening to the divine oracles, lending his ear to the teachers and partaking of the mystic table, and then would return to that novel dwelling....*[189] It would seem, therefore, that the coenobitic centres of eremitism

184 Cf. *Didache*, XIV, 2.
185 On this unusual way of celebrating the Eucharist, Canivet, *Monachisme syrien*, 232.
186 *HR*, XX, 4; tr. 132.
187 *HR*, XXVI, 7; tr. 163. Cf. *Syriac Life*, 517, 521, 523, 528, 540, 581.
188 *HR*, XXX, 1; tr. 186.
189 *HR*, XII, 5; tr. 97.

celebrated the Eucharist, though it is not known how frequently this occurred. Malchus the hermit belonged to such a community who were *constant frequenters of the Church.*[190] It would perhaps be wise to withhold judgement on this subject. The early Syrian historians of the eremitic movement seem to have taken little notice of the hermits' Eucharistic practices and their information on this point is sparse. For most hermits the Eucharist was a means for the self-realisation of Christ's death and resurrection, and its celebration was not of primary importance.

Before bring this discussion to a close, however, it is important to look briefly at other early Syrian attitudes towards the Eucharist. Ignatius of Antioch rged Christians to attend Christian meetings more frequently, in particular the ucharist. Unfortunately, he did not say how often and when.[191] The *Didache* ipulates that the Eucharist must be held on the Lord's Day, (i.e. on Sunday): *On the Lord's day come together, break bread and hold Eucharist, after confessing your transgressions that your offering may be pure; but let none who has a quarrel with his fellow join in your meeting until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice be not defiled....*[192] The *Didache* insists that the Eucharist should be given only to those who have been baptised: *But let none eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptised in the Lord's Name. For concerning this also did the Lord say, 'Give not that which is holy to the dogs'.*[193] In the *Acts of Thomas*, the Eucharist is celebrated directly after baptism, apparently early on Sunday morning.[194] It was also celebrated by the Christian community at times other than baptism, though again we are completely ignorant of how frequently this actually occurred.[195] The *Didascalia*, by contrast, is clear on this point; Christians should come regularly on Sundays to celebrate the Eucharist: *The apostles constituted that on the first day of the week, there shall be service and the reading of the Holy Scriptures and the offering because on the first day of the week our Lord rose from Sheol and on the first day of the week manifested Himself in the world, and on the first day of the week, He appears at the last with the angels of heaven.*[196] The *Didascalia* tells bishops to urge their congregation to attend Church regularly: *Now when you teach, again command and warn the people to persevere in the assembly of the Church, and not to be stopped but constantly to be assembled that no one diminish the Church by not assembling, and cause the body of Christ*

190 Jerome, *Malchus*, 315, 2.
191 Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 13, 1; 20, 2; *Mag.* 4; *Phil.* 4; 10, 1; *Smyr.* 7, 1; 8; *Poly.* 4, 2.
192 *Didache*, XIV; tr. 331.
193 *Didache*, IX; tr. 323.
194 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 26-29; 49-50; 118-121; 133; 158.
195 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 169.
196 *Didascalia*, III, 41; tr. 37.

to be smaller by a member.... On the Lord's day leave everything and run eagerly to your Church for she is your glory... hear the word of life and be nourished with the divine food which abides forever....[197] There is much evidence to suggest that, during the period of the rise of early eremitism, the Syrian Church celebrated the Eucharist every Sunday. This may also have been the practice of some coenobitic Syrian communities, though there is no evidence that it was widespread.

The absence of the Eucharist from the lives of individual hermits could be explained by their belief in the need to realise the sacraments as part of their daily existence: *Throughout the day and all the night their work is naught bu liturgy. Instead of incense, for they have none, their purity is a reconciliatic and instead of the edifice of a Church they themselves have become temples the Holy Spirit. In the stead of an altar they have their minds, whereupon a. sacrifice they offer up onto the Godhead their supplication, which at every hou is found well-pleasing.*[198] A similar text repeats this eremitic interpretation: *Their bodies are temples of the Spirit, and churches are their minds. Their prayer is a pure censer, and their treats are fragrant incense. Their sighs are an offering, their psalmsinging is a festival.*[199] In a vision, Symeon Stylites was given to understand that his eremitic vocation and ministry among the people was an altar of salvation: *when sinners were converted by Symeon they praised the Lord with him.*[200] John Chrysostom calls the hermit's dwelling place a tabernacle; as holy people they themselves became a festal choir.[201] The main obligation of the hermit's vocation was fulfilled when his whole person became an offering to God. Such a one was a priest in himself because his eremitic labours constituted a continuous Eucharist, celebrated for the Lord: *They serve as priests for themselves and they celebrate* (offer) *their sufferings, always they give to themselves absolution from the tears; their fastings are their Eucharists and their vigils their libations, their prayers their assistants* (stewards), *their faith is a sanctuary, their minds are the altars, their virginity the perfect sacrifice, their love a veil* (of the altar or sanctuary) *and their humility a censer of incense.*[202] Wherever the Eucharist of the Church is celebrated, the holy hermits were spiritually present; through their beliefs they felt themselves to be united with the whole Church.[203] Everything in the life of the hermit became a pure and true offering and through himself he offered the whole of creation to

197 *Didascalia*, XIII, 148-149; tr. 135.
198 Beck, *Sermones* IV, II, 485-497; tr. 479.
199 Beck, *Sermones* IV, II, 97-101; tr. 473.
200 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 510-512.
201 Cf. Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXIX, 3; *Tim.* XIV; *Stat.* XVII, 5.
202 *Ms. Sharf.* 19/1, fol. 79 ab. The quotation is taken from Vööbus, *Ephrem*, 83-84.
203 Overbeck, *S. Ephraemi Syri*, 121.

God.[204] The hermit celebrated the Eucharist every instant by continually offering himself to the Lord. Accordingly, the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist seemed strange to the majority of hermits who pursued a solitary individual life. Macedonius, for example, could not understand the difference between a Eucharistic liturgy and the liturgy of ordination to the priesthood; for a long time he did not attend any liturgical celebration. [205] This eremitic understanding of the Eucharist had its foundations in the early Syrian tradition. In the *Odes of Solomon*, the Eucharistic offering is 'righteousness' and 'purity':

I am a priest of the Lord,
And to him I minister as priest,
And to him I offer the offering of his thought.
For not as the world,
Nor as the flesh, is his thought,
Nor as those who serve in a fleshly way.
The offering of the Lord is righteousness,
And purity of heart and lips.
Offer your kidneys without blemish,
And let not your bowels afflict another's bowels,
And let not your soul afflict another's soul.... [206]

The *Didascalia* adds: *Hear, you catholic Church of God, that were rescued from the ten plagues and did receive the ten sayings, and did learn the Law, and hold the faith and believe in the Yod in the beginning of the Name, and are fixed in the perfection of His glory: instead of the sacrifices of that time, offer now prayers and supplication and thanksgiving.*[207] Ignatius of Antioch considered his martyrdom a pure sacrifice for the Lord.[208]

e. Priesthood

The priesthood and the eremitic life stood in opposition to each other. Hermits and priests led two different styles of life which were not readily compatible. Those hermits who did become priests were ordained against their will and accepted the ministry only on account of their great love for Christ's flock. The biographers, by contrast, regarded ordination as the Church authorities' special recognition of the hermits' holiness: *When about to set out*

204 Cf. *Julian Saba* (Beck), 41, 12; 65, 15; *HR*, IV, 12, 13; V, 3; VI, 12; VIII, 1; IX, 7, 14; X, 2; XII, 4; XIII, 16-18; Macarius, *Homilies*, IV, 12.
205 Cf. *HR*, XIII, 4.
206 *Odes of Solomon*, XX, 1-5; tr. 710.
207 *Didascalia*, IX, 103; tr. 99; cf. *ibid.* 113; XI, 139.
208 Cf. Ignatius, *Rom.* 2, 2; 4.

on his migration from here, he (Acepsimas) *foretold that he would come to the end of life after fifty days, and received everyone who wished to see him. The leader of the Church, on his arrival, pressed him to accept the yoke of a priest. 'I know, father,' he said, 'both the elevation of your philosophy and the excess of my poverty, but entrusted as I am with the episcopal office, it is in virtue of the latter not of the former that I perform ordinations. Accept then* (he continued) *the gift of the priesthood, a gift to which my hand ministers, but which is supplied by the grace of the all-holy Spirit. 'To this he is said to have replied, 'Since I am emigrating from here in a few days, I shall not quarrel about this. If I were going to live for a long time, I would utterly have fled from the heavy and fearful burden of the priesthood, terrified at answering for the deposit. But sinc in no long time I shall depart and leave what is here, I shall accept obedien what you command.' And so at once, without any compulsion, the one awaiti the grace on bended knee, and the other laying on his hand ministered to th Spirit.*[209]

Rabbula, who spent only a short time in the ascetic life under the direction of Alexander Akoimetos, was elected a bishop of Edessa: *God who is merciful and loves mankind, who alone has no remembrance of wrong, who has said, 'Those who honour me I will honour',*[210] *fulfilled his promise in this man, and did not long keep hidden His good servant, but revealed him as a light for the world. For when the bishop of Edessa died, the whole city and the surrounding area wanted him to be their shepherd, and he was elected leader of the people by many votes. Edessa is the metropolitan see of Mesopotamia.*[211] On the other hand, the master of Rabbula, Alexander the Sleepless (Akoimetos), refused to be the *shepherd*[212] of people in Edessa and preferred to leave the city secretly for a different place: *Seeing Rabbula nobly disposed and recognising that he was capable of leading to God others, and all those who in due time would become followers of the faith, the father of reason-endowed sheep Alexander rejoiced in his heart. He knew from these works that everything is possible to him who believes, and that our Master God is ready to give to those who ask things pleasing to Him. So he thought again what he should ask of the merciful Christ. The people were trying by every means to keep him with them because of their great love for him, so that they asked for him as their shepherd. Knowing this, he planned to leave the city secretly. Realising this, the people of the city mounted guards at the city gates and kept him under observation night and day, lest they should lose their true father. But the blessed one, unable to leave openly, was let*

209 *HR*, XV, 4; tr. 115.
210 *1Kings* 2, 30.
211 Stoop, *Alexander*, 21.
212 From the text, this word 'shepherd' indicates clearly a priesthood ministry.

down over the walls in a basket by his disciples at night, like the blessed Paul,[213] *and thus left the city.*[214]

Honorary ordination was bestowed on Macedonius without his knowledge: *The innocence and simplicity of his character we shall show from other instances. When the great Flavian had been appointed to shepherd the great flock of God, and learnt of this man's virtue--for praise of him circulated in the mouths of all--he got him down from the mountain-top by pretending that a charge had been made against him; while the mystic liturgy was being offered up, he led him to the altar and enrolled him among the priests.*[215] *When at the end of the liturgy someone informed him of this--for he was completely ignorant of what had happened--at first he was full of reproaches and assailed everyone with words. Then, taking his stick (because of old age he was wont to walk with support), he pursued the bishop himself and all those present, for he supposed that the ordination would deprive him of the mountain-top and the life he loved....*[216] Another strange ordination was imposed on Salamanes, who exhibited no love for the priesthood: *The bishop of the city to which the village belonged, learning of the man's virtue* (Salamanes') *came with the intention of giving him the gift of the priesthood; getting in by digging through a part of the hut, he laid on his hand and performed the prayer, and spoke to him at length, explaining the grace resulting. Without hearing any speech he departed, after ordering the hole to be walled up again.*[217] Though many bishops tried in vain to impose ordination on Marcianus.[218] St. Ephrem considered Mar Jacob and his companions to be three priests entrusted with the ministry of Christ's flock: *Three illustrious priests, after the manner of the two great lights, have carried on and handed down one to another, the See of the Hand and the Flock. To us whose mourning was great for the two, this last is wholly a consolation....*[219]

From Rabbula's rules it is evident that some monasteries provided village churches with priests and deacons: *(For) those who are priests and deacons in the monasteries and to whom churches in the villages have been entrusted, the rešai-dairata* (the superiors of the monasteries) *in their monasteries shall appoint these who have shown proof and are able to guide the brotherhood, and those shall remain in their churches.*[220] This fact is of some importance for it

213 *Acts* 9, 24-25.

214 Stoop, *Alexander*, 23.

215 'This honorary ordination of holy men was doubtless partly motivated by a desire to place their charisma firmly under the aegis of the established ecclesiastical hierarchy. Ordination of this kind, involving no pastoral charge, was declared invalid by the sixth Canon of the Council of Chalcedon (451)', Price, *History*, 108.

216 *HR*, XIII, 4; tr. 101-102.

217 *HR*, XIX, 2; tr. 129.

218 Cf. *HR, III, 11.*

219 Ephrem, *Nisibene Hymns*, XIII, 1; tr. 180.

demonstrates that where hermits were concerned the priesthood was not restricted to the so-called 'honourary priesthood'. On the contrary, it became an ecclesiastical custom to entrust the pastoral care of some churches to monks. This is confirmed by the *Theodosian Code* which even encouraged bishops to nominate monks for the priesthood whenever it should prove necessary: *If perchance the bishops should suppose that they are in need of clerics, they will more properly ordain them from the number of monks. They shall not incur disfavour by holding those persons who are bound by public and private accounts but shall have those already approved. (July 26, 398).*[221]

Eventually monk-bishops became regular features of the Syrian Church a many hermits were chosen for the episcopal see by the people and the Chu authorities.[222] The hermit was chosen for episcopal office on account of holiness, his fame, his zeal, and his love for Jesus Christ and His flock. James Nisibis, Julian Saba, Marcianus, Aphthonius, Helladius, Abraham, and all th Syrian hermits who first became priests and bishops were important figures in the history of the early Church--an importance which has hardly diminished, even to the present day. Such men paved a way for the Church authorities to lead hermits out of the silent desert and into a life of pastoral activity. In so doing they instigated the trend of monastic domination in the Syrian Church that has continued to this day.[223] As was noted above, however, the primary reason for choosing a monk as a bishop or priest was his holiness and this was a reflection of his ascetic way of life. It had nothing to do with the pursuit of human power or reward, either for individuals or institutions; holiness alone attracted people, clergy as well as lay, to choose a monk to shepherd Christ's flock.[224] The ideal of a holy bishop was already deeply rooted in the mentality of Syrian Christians before the rise of eremitism. Ignatius of Antioch, for instance, required the bishop to be possessed of all the Christian virtues: meekness, humility, love, peace, poverty, mercy, discernment, and diligence. In addition, he had to be a father to the poor and to orphans.[225]

220 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 31, 21; cf. *HR*, XIV, 2.

221 *Theodosian Code*, 16. 2. 32; cf. *ibid.* 9. 40. 16. 2.

222 Cf. *HR*, I, 7; II, 9; III, 5; V, 8; X, 9; XVII, 1, 4-5ff.

223 'Monasticism began to play a greater role in the Church. It began to conquer bishop's seats constantly, even in the important centers. In some of these important centers like Karka de Bet Selok, the metropolis of Bet Garmai, this took place frequently. Bishop Aqeblaha was formerly a monk, having adopted the ascetic life since he was 15 years old. The chronicle of Karka says that his outstanding asceticism and mortification so fascinated the people that he was elected to the bishop's seat. Obviously he also possessed other qualities for he had great merits in healing wounds caused by persecution....', Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 264-265; cf. *ibid.* II, 329.

224 Cf. Leroux, 'Monachisme', 148.

225 Cf. Ignatius, *Poly.* 1, 2, 4.

The *Didache* prescribed an equally lofty spirituality,[226] while the *Didascalia* advanced a similar view of the bishop and his functions: *And let him be very diligent in his teaching, and constant in reading the divine scripture diligently in order that he may interpret and expound the scriptures thoroughly.... let not the bishop be 'a lover of defiled lucre'....*[227] *Let him not love riches... let him not be angry, nor loving strife... let him not be double-minded or double-tongued.... And let him be wise and ascetic....*[228] Further, whatever was required of the bishop was required from all the clergy.[229] While a few hermits were ordained priests and bishops, most of them remained faithful to their eremitic ideal, which was not a training school for the priesthood. The hermits often rejected the priesthood, prefering the solitude of the desert to life among the ranks of the clergy and the temptations of worldly pride and social corruption. The monk-priests in the monasteries had no special privileges; their only distinction was that they celebrated the Eucharist for their communities. They were subordinate to the superior of the community who, very often, was not a priest.[230] Spiritually, the hermit became a priest unto himself and ministered to God day and night in his own Church--his heart.

f. The Church and the Heart

The hermit did not reject the wider meaning of *Church* as the assembly of believers in Christ and the place of communal prayer. But in his life of singleness in the desert, the hermit developed a personal understanding of the word *Church*. For the hermit, the Church was the body with the heart at its centre. He thus prayed in his body which was a *pure temple of God*,[231] and joined the assembly of God in his heart: *Though he lives alone, in this time of the body's seeing, yet in his heart he is secretly joined to the assemblies of the sons of the Most High.*[232] The pure heart was the dwelling of God and the hermit looked at God and His creation with the pure eyes of the heart.[233] God shone in the pure heart for His image was drawn in it, and he who dwelt in his heart was truly one with himself and with God.[234] The heart symbolized the whole being and was the centre of everything.[235] The hermit, therefore, worked day and

226 Cf. *Didache*, XV.

227 *1Tim.* III, 8.

228 *Didascalia*, IV, 55-57; tr. 47-48.

229 Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 1-6; *Mag.* 2-7; *Tral.* 1-3; 7; *Phil.* 1-8; *Smyr.* 8-9; *Didascalia*, III, 28-29; 44-45; IV-IX; XI-XII; XVI, 175; XVIII, 180; XIX.

230 Cf. Canivet, *Monachisme syrien*, 230-231.

231 Beck, *Sermones* IV, 182; *Abraham Qidunaya*, IX, 18.

232 Beck, *Sermones* IV, 169; tr. 474.

233 Cf. *Liber Graduum*, XVIII. *Abraham Qidunaya* (Beck), II,3; XIII,11; *Julian Saba*, XXIII.3.

234 Cf. *Abraham Qidunaya*, V, 19; X, 15; *Julian Saba*, II, 9; VIII, 8; X, 9; XV, 5.; Macarius, *Homilies*, XV, 20.

235 Cf. Guillaumont, 'Les sens des noms du coeur', 41-81; *Origines du monachisme*, 63-66:

night to purify his heart: ... *freeing himself from any worldly care, he* (Publius) *took one care to replace them all, the service of the One who had called him, and turning this over in his heart, continued night and day considering and examining how to increase it.*[236] Chrysostom believed that the hermit sought to make his heart a pure temple for God, where he could converse with Him continually.[237] The *Acts of Thomas* had already preached this: *purity is the temple of God, and everyone who guardeth it, guardeth His temple, and the Messiah dwelleth in Him.*[238] One may also compare the *Odes of Solomon*: For the habitation of the Word is a man,*and his truth is love.*[239] Similarly, Ignatius of Antioch argued that every Christian carried God within himself: *You are then all fellow-travellers and carry with you God, and the Temple, and Christ, and holiness, and all are ways adorned by commandments.*[240] Thus, the herm sought to fulfil his Church's call to pray unceasingly, regardless of where lived and of his social status.[241]

5. THE BIBLE

The Bible was, of course, the hermit's main book and remained his guide throughout his life.[242] Whatever the hermit did or said, he based himself on the Word of God, which was the light of his life and the surest way to salvation.[243] John the Solitary called upon the hermits to fortify their lives with a *persevering study of the word of light*[244] and Rabbula prescribed continuous meditation on the word of God: *Slip your feet out from the nooses of guile by meditating on the law of the Lord day and night.*[245] The Bible, and in particular the four Gospels, governed the lives of the early Syrian hermits. Alexander the Sleepless (Akoimetos) and his community regarded the word of God as their sole rule of life. Syrian hermits were very well instructed in the word of God,[246] and their life of prayer was punctuated with daily readings from the Scriptures: ... *he*

Bunge, 'Le lieu de la limpidité', 7ff; Spidlik, *Spiritualité de l'Orient*, 105-106ff; cf. Brock, 'The Prayer of the Heart in Syriac Tradition', 131-142.

236 *HR*, V, 2; tr. 58.

237 Cf. Chrysostom, *Priest.* VI, 2ff.

238 *Acts of Thomas*, 86; tr. 110; cf. *ibid.* 6, 7.

239 *Odes of Solomon*, 12, 12; tr. 703.

240 Ignatius, *Eph.* IX, 2; tr. 183.

241 Cf. *HR*, *Prol.* 7; III,2; IV,5,12; V,2; IV,12; VI,14; X,2; XXIV,1, 6; XXVI,23; XXVII,1; XXIX,2; Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 22, 16; *Acts of Thomas*, 3; 5; 6-7; 12; 15; 95; 104; 144.

242 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 509-511; 574; 617; *HR*, IVX, 4; V, 7; VI, 8; IX, 6; X, 1, 3; XI, 2; XII, 2, 4-5; XIII, 8; XIV, 2; XV, 1; XVII, 6; XXI, 3, 19; XXVI, 2-3, 12, 17; XXX, 5; *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Beck), IX, 16; XI, 15; *Julian Saba*, XVIII, 15; Macarius, *Homilies*, XXXIX.

243 Cf. Beck, *Sermones* IV, 480; John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 462; Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LV, 7; *Eph.* XXI; cf. *HR*, V,7; VI,8; VIII,1; X,3; XX,17; *Liber Graduum*, 868-869, 889-905, 913.

244 John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 462; cf. Chrysostom, *Eph.* XXI; Theodoret, *HR*, XXXI, 20.

245 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 22 (17).

246 Cf. *HR*, *Prol.* 6.

(Marcianus) *embraced the most pleasant labor; psalmody succeeded prayer, prayer succeeded psalmody, and both again were succeeded by reading the divine oracles.*[247] Chrysostom confirms that such a routine of prayer and reading was practised, not only by the single hermit, but also by the coenobitic hermits: *after they have ended the choir, one takes Isaiah and discourses with him, another converses with the apostles...*[248] Chrysostom repeats this in another homily: *But these holy men, having performed their morning prayers and hymns, proceed to the reading of the scriptures.*[249] When a hermit read the divine scripture, light from the Most High enlightened his mind, enabling him to understand the word of God according to His will: *On one occasion, wishing to see what he did at night, he* (Eusebius) *dared to go up to the window (which was small); and peering in, he saw a light, not a lamp or made by hands but God-given and of the grace from above, flashing from the teacher's* (Marcianus') *head and revealing the composition of letters in the divine oracles, for he happened to be holding a book and searching out the inviolate treasury of the divine will. Seeing this, the wonderful Eusebius was filled with dread and became full of awe; he was instructed about the grace poured down upon the divine ministrant and learnt the good will of God towards his servants.*[250]

One need not speak on one's own behalf, for *each day the God of the universe speaks through creation and discourses through the divine scriptures, recommends what is necessary and proposes what is advantageous, alarms with threats and encourages with promises, and yet we reap no profit.*[251] All those who wished to follow Christ through the eremitic life were initiated into *the evangelical way of life.*[252] When the mysteries of the word of God required interpretation the hermits would turn to those among them who were most advanced in divine wisdom for an explanation of any hidden meanings.[253] When a hermit spoke to people he took his word from scripture: *despite the fervor of his love, he* (Eusebius of Asikha) *allowed a few of his friends to unblock the doorway and pass within; offering them the nourishment of the divine oracles...*[254] Aphrahat left his silent retreat to preach the word of God: *From there he repaired to Antioch... Settling in a philosophic retreat in front of the town... he drew vast numbers to hear the divine oracles... he brought forth the offspring of his thought, receiving such streams from the grace of the holy Spirit....*[255] The special place which the Bible occupied in the hermit's life was

247 *HR*, III, 2; tr. 38; cf. *ibid.* III, 5; V, 2.
248 Chysostom, *Mtt.* LXVIII; tr. 419.
249 Chrysostom, *Tim.* XIV; tr. 457.
250 *HR*, III, 6; tr. 39.
251 *HR*, III, 11; tr. 42.
252 *HR*, IV, 3; tr. 50; cf. *ibid*, IV, 10; VIII, 1; X, 1; XXVIII, 4.
253 Cf. *HR*, IV, 6, 10.
254 *HR*, XVIII, 2; tr. 127.

equal to that which it held in the early Syrian Church in general. It was considered to be the unique basis of the Christian faith and the most important book for every Christian.[256] From the evidence in the writings of the Syrian fathers it would seem that the Bible, the Old and the New Testaments, had been of prime importance in the Syrian Church, at least since the second century. The Syrian hermits simply continued this tradition, paying special attention to the Gospels for their *hegyana*, and making special use of the psalms for their liturgy.[257] They used the *Peshitta* text of the Bible,[258] although earlier, the *Evangelion da Mepharresh* had been prescribed by Rabbula in preference to th *Diatessaron*.[259]

6. LOVE AND BROTHERHOOD

The hermit was called to a life of love, the love of God and the love of neighbour: *'Tell me, my friend,' he said to him* (Ammianus is speaking Eusebius of Teleda), *'whom do you think to please by having adopted this laborious and austere life?' He, of course, as was natural, replied: God, the teacher and lawgiver of virtue. 'So, since you love him,' continued Ammianus, 'I shall show you a way by which you will both kindle your love the more and serve the beloved. Restricting all one's care to oneself would not escape, I think, the charge of self-love, for the divine law prescribes loving one's neighbor as oneself. Admitting many to a share of one's wealth is characteristic of the virtue of charity, and it is charity that the inspired Paul called 'fulfilment of the law'.'*[260] *he exclaims again, 'The whole law and the prophets are summed up in the following saying, 'You will love your neighbor as yourself...'*[261] *So since you too are a fervent lover of the God who has created and saved, make many, others as well his lovers; for this is especially welcome to the common Master....'*[262] John the Solitary urged the hermits to be disciples of divine love, for that alone could purge them of sin and reform them in the image of God:

255 *HR*, VIII, 2; tr. 73; cf. *ibid.* IX, 6; XXII, 1.

256 Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Phil*, 5, 1; 8, 2; *Smyr*. 7, 2; *Didache*, 1-4; 15, 4; Theophilus of Antioch, I, 14; II, 9ff; III, 9ff; Tatian, 29-35ff; *Odes of Solomon*, 9, 3; *Didascalia, Intro.* 10, 12; II, 17-20, 22, 27, 37; III, 41, 43-44; IV, 52, 55-56; V, 58; VI, 71; VII, 83; VIII, 96; IX, 109-110; XII, 146; XXI, 205, 214-215; XXII; XXIII, 228; XXIV, 232; XXV, 240; XXVI, 254-256, 261, 265; X, 119-120; Aphrahat, 1045-1048.

257 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 289f.

258 Cf. Vööbus, *Peschitta und Targumin; Researches on the Circulation of the Peshitta*; *History of Asceticism* II, 391ff.

259 Rabbula ordered his clergy to use this version of the New Testament: 'The priests and deacons shall exercise (due) care that in all the churches a copy of the Evangelion da-mepharresh shall be, and is being read', Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 47, 43. Cf. on this subject, Vööbus, *Investigations into the Text*, 1ff.

260 *Rom.* 13, 10.

261 *Rom.* 13, 9.

262 *HR*, IV, 4; tr. 50-51; cf. *Liber Graduum*, 860-861ff.

More than other beautiful things it is fitting that the love of Christ should abound in us. For the love of Christ is a fire, in very truth, whereby the passions of the soul are consumed, even as brushwood is consumed by a fiery blaze. It extinguishes anger, it puts an end to hatred, it holds envy in contempt, and it withers lust. The love of Christ destroys avarice, it abhors the love of glory, it gathers together into one the sons of light, it unites and fastens together its adherents, causes them to have concord among themselves and makes them into one body. The love of Christ fashions them into a single image and causes them to dwell in one another; the love, I mean, which has stirred up the worlds with the desire of the vision of Him, that vision which is more desirable than all things.[263]

Love was unity among the hermits for *there is not mine and thine* (among them), *but this expression is exterminated, that is a cause of countless wars.*[264] Their mutual love resulted in equality which was a source of peace and harmony:[265] *But often two of them dwell together: here, then, reigns great love. And although they are two, yet their will is one. And many times there are three: here, then, concord abides, for there are no divisions, no slyness, but only love and peace. And elsewhere there are four: with them the holy Spirit dwells. For they are but one single body, a single, pure temple of God.*[266] The same *memra* adds: *None strives with his neighbour, since love dwells in their midst. None among them hates his companion, since perfect concord reigns amongst them.*[267] In spite of his solitude, the hermit's aim was to remain full of love for human society and especially for those who shared his faith. He was always ready to give up the life of seclusion to protect the Christian community from evil.[268] Most hermits, perhaps even all of them, constantly received visitors who sought their spiritual aid. As we have seen, they were prepared to take up missions of preaching if their love of Christ and their fellow men necessitated such action.

7. WORK

Everything the hermit did in his life, whether spiritually or physically, was considered a work of God. The author of the *Syriac life* regarded Symeon the Stylite as one engaged in spiritual work in the field of God: *To our brethren and sons and friends, children of the Holy Catholic Church: we make known to you in our writings the glorious deeds of the Man of God, who was a friend to the Christ. He gave himself to service in the vineyard of our Lord from the dawn*

263 John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 465; cf. *HR*, II, 2; VII, 1.
264 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXXII, 3; tr. 439; cf. *HR*, III, 14; V, 4.
265 Cf. Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXIX, 4; LXXII, 4.
266 Beck, *Sermones* IV, II, 173-181; tr. 474.
267 Tr. 473; Cf. *HR*, IV, 3.
268 Cf. *HR*, II, 16; III, 13; X, 3-4; XI, 3; XVIII; XXV, 1.

even until the evening all the days of his life. He turned the stubborn of heart to conviction, and finished his struggle with praise, and his Lord took him to himself, that he might pay him the good reward of his labour in the land of the consummation of life eternal--the blessed Mar Simeon.[269] The hermits' labours were an act of love for God: *And because through love we have recounted their labours, so that their victory should be proclaimed.*[270] The hermit conceived of himself as a *servant of Jesus Christ* working to spread His heavenly kingdom.[271] Some hermits, especially the coenobitic hermits, performed regular manual work like poor peasants to provide themselves with food.

They also sought simply to occupy themselves with hard physical labour. T' eremitic community of Theodosius in Rhosus exemplifies this way of life: *W with the passing of time his fame circulated everywhere, many hastened from sides, wishing to share his dwelling, labors, and way of life; these* (Theodosius) *welcomed and guided in this life. One could observe some weaving sails, others hair coats, some plaiting mats or creels, other assigned to agriculture. And since the place was on the sea, he later built a landing-place which he used for the needs of merchandise, exporting the products of the brethren and importing what was needed. He remembered the apostolic utterance which runs 'Working night and day, that we might not burden any of you',*[272] *and, 'These hands assisted both myself and those with me'.*[273] *And so he both labored himself and urged his companions to add to the labors of the soul exertion for the body: 'While those engaged in life toil and labor to support children and wives, and in addition pay taxes and are dunned for tribute, and also offer the first-fruits to God and supply the needs of beggars as far as they are able, it would be absurd for us not to supply our essential needs from labor--especially since we use scanty and simple food and simple dress,--but to sit indoors with our arms crossed, reaping the handiwork of others'. By this and similar remarks he stimulated them to work, performing at the proper times the divine liturgies that are customary everywhere and alloting the time in between to work.*[274] According to Theodoret, the community of Domnina occupied themselves with manual work, *assigning their hands to card wool, and consecrating their tongues with hymns.*[275] Even as superior of his community,

269 *Syriac Life*, 508; tr. 111; cf. *HR*, III, 12, 19, 21; IV, 4, 12; V, 2, 9; VI, 2; VIII, 1; XVI, 1; XVII, 1; XVII, 11; XXI, 3; XXIII, 2; XXIV, 1, 3-4; Macarius, *Homilies*, XXVI, 19; *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Beck), I, 4; IV, 21; VII, 6; XII; *Julian Saba*, III, 6ff; VIII, 14ff; IX; XI; XIII, 14; XXI, 16.

270 Beck, *Sermones* IV, 520; tr. 480.

271 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 513-514, 529, 597, 531; *Antony Life*, 494 (4); 496 (10); 502 (24); 506 (31); *HR*, II, 16; III, 6, 9, 15; IV, 3, 4; IV, 2; V, 7; IX, 15; XIV, 5; XXIX, 2.

272 *IThess.* 3, 8.

273 *Acts*, 20, 34.

274 *HR*, X, 3; tr. 90; cf. Jerome, *Malchus*, 317, 7.

Aphthonius always took a part in its labours: *He performed each of the (spiritual) tasks, while, in between, stitching the rags of his companions or cleaning lentils or washing grain or doing something else of this kind.*[276] Chrysostom confirms that the hermits interspersed their prayers with a variety of tasks: *digging in the earth, and watering, and planting, or making baskets, or weaving sackcloth, or practising any other handy works.*[277] The coenobitic community in Chalcis which Malchus joined prescribed manual labour as a daily duty: *I* (Malchus) *placed myself under their direction, earning my livelihood by the labour of my hands, and curbing the wantonness of the flesh by fasting.*[278] In his *Rules*, Rabbula warned the hermits against using their labours as a pretext for neglecting religious worship: *The monks shall not, under the pretext of occupation and work, fail the times that are appointed for the worship-service day and night.*[279] Evidently, for hermits involved in the coenobitic life, manual work was a part of daily life.

By contrast, this does not appear to have been the case with hermits who pursued a life of solitude. According to Theodoret and other Syrian biographers, these hermits took no interest in manual work because they were fully occupied with their spiritual devotions. This is by no means certain, however, and one should not conclude that no solitary hermit ever performed any kind of manual labour--especially in view of the fact that some hermits refused to have any of their physical needs met by other people.[280] And yet, there is a passage in the *Didascalia* which might justify the single hermits' rejection of manual work: *But let us look and see, brethren, that most men in their mourning imitate the Sabbath, and that likewise, those who keep the Sabbath, imitate mourning.*[281] *Indeed, he who mourns kindles no light, nor do the (Jewish) people on the Sabbath, because of the commandment of Moses, for so was it commanded them by him. He that mourns does not wash himself, nor the people on the Sabbath. He that mourns does not furnish a table, nor do the people on the Sabbath,*[282] *but they furnish and set for themselves the evening (before), because they have a presentiment of mourning, that they were to lay hands on Jesus. He that mourns does not work, but sits in sadness, (so too) in this way again the people on the Sabbath. Indeed it was said to the people concerning the mourning of the Sabbath thus: 'You shall not lift your foot to do (any) work, and you shall speak no word out of your mouth'.*[283] This chapter from the *Didascalia* is of major

275 *HR*, XXX, 4; tr. 187.
276 *HR*, V, 98; tr. 61.
277 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXXII, 4; tr. 439; cf. *ibid.* LXVIII, 3; LXIX, 3; *Tim.* XIV.
278 Jerome, *Malchus*, 316, 3.
279 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 30 (16).
280 Cf. *HR*, VIII, 3; IX, 4.
281 Cf. *Ex.* 35, 3.
282 Cf. *Ex.* 16, 29.

importance for it explains some central tenets in the eremitic life. The hermits conceived of themselves as sinners who sought resurrection through a life of seclusion. Leaving aside the spiritual work which they performed for God's sake, the Syrian hermits may have been influenced by that part of their Church's theology which revolved around the concepts of sin and grace, death and life, Sabbath, the day of inner purification,[284] and Sunday, the day of resurrection. According to the Bible, moreover, manual work came into the world after the Fall. Adam and Eve had no need of it before their disobedience.[285] One may compare the *Odes of Solomon* where the work of man--who is himself the best work of God[286]--is to praise God perpetually and to toil for the spread of His wisdom.[287]

C. MORTIFICATION

There can be no doubt that the early Syrian hermits subjected themselves some of the most severe bodily mortifications ever recorded in the history of Christianity. Along with the spiritual basis of mortification, however, one must consider the character of the Syrian people, which played an important role in this matter.

1. THE BODY

Although the body was sacred for the hermits, it had been soiled by sin and had lost its original purity and holiness. Moritifcation aimed to purify the body and to restore it to its heavenly glory: *Greatly they afflict their bodies, not as though they loved them not, but because they wish to bring them in glory into Eden.*[288] Sin could be committed through misuse of bodily passions and desires. Thus, the hermits fought against Satan who tried to tempt them into such misuse.[289] Acts of mortification were performed to torture the Satan within themselves: *They have banished all their lusts, and to fasting yoked their bodies. They trampled upon Satan's head, and he caught them not in his nets. They brake the yoke of sin, because it had no dominion in their bodies. By them was Satan slain, because he could not slay them with his (weapons). They bound him and flew away, because they were not entangled in his trammels. Under their tortures they evaded his snares. He howled under their combs of iron, because they tore him by their labours.*[290] Typically, Syrian spirituality regarded the

283 *Didascalia*, XXI, 216-217; tr. 100-201.
284 Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Mag.* 9, 1; *Didascalia*, XXI, 207, 215, 216; XXVI, 251-253.
285 Cf. Theophilus of Antioch, II, 25ff.
286 Cf. *Odes of Solomon*, VIII.
287 Cf. *Odes of Solomon*, 11, 20ff.; 12, 7f.; 16, 1-6; *Acts of Thomas*, 2-3; 17-18.
288 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 189; tr. 474.
289 Cf. John the Solitary, I; *HR*, *Prol.* 6.
290 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 140-150; tr. 473.

whole human being as sacred and chaste despite the sins that spoilt human purity. Mortification was not a struggle with the body *per se* but rather with the sin that dwelt within it: *Mortify their bodies upon the earth, that they be not stained with sin.*[291]

2. THE FIGHT OF THE ATHLETES

The eremitic life was a fight against Satan. The hermit's sole enemy was thought to be his own sin, and that was understood in terms of his own ignorance and darkness. The hermit could only conquer his enemy by persevering in his love of the Lord. Symeon the Stylite was held as an example of endurance: *Many battles he had with the Enemy of the good....*[292] *But he was not afraid of hem, neither was he terrified by their shriekings, but kept occupied in the ervice of his Lord....*[293] Symeon spent his entire life combatting the enemy with he weapon of mortification: *In hunger and thirst, in heat and cold, continually, unceasingly, in supplication without interruption, and standing at all the times; who gave no sleep to his eyes nor repose to his body fifty-six years night and day.*[294] Chrysostom describes the Syrian hermits as Christ's soldiers fighting the lusts of the sinful world in their hearts: *look at the tents of Christ's soldiers, we shall see not canvas stretched, neither points of spears, nor golden garments making a royal pavilion...*[295] *And if thou art able to observe, come and stretch forth thy hand to me, and let us go into this war, both of us* (Chrysostom and the Christian assembly), *and let us see their battle array. For these too fight every day, and slay their adversaries, and conquer all the lusts that are plotting against us; and thou wilt see these cast out on the ground, and not able so much as to struggle, but proving by very deed that saying of the apostle, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.'*[296] Alexander Akoimetos fought a good fight in order to remain loyal to his asctic Biblical spirituality: *In the four years he spent there Alexander made progress in the Lord, fighting the good fight and being obedient in all things. He paid precise attention to whether this life was in accordance with the divine Scriptures.... In the four years he spent there Alexander made progress in the Lord, fighting the good fight and being obedient in all things. He paid precise attention to whether this life was in accordance with the divine Scriptures.*[297] Wherever Alexander went with his disciples, *they had no possessions except for the parchments on which they had the Holy Scriptures.*[298]

291 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 21; tr. 471.
292 *Syriac Life*, 529; tr. 125; cf. *ibid.* 523, 574-575.
293 *Syriac Life*, 536; tr. 126; cf. *ibid.* 535, 537-540.
294 *Syriac Life*, 519-520; tr. 182; cf. *ibid.* 638.
295 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXIX, 3; tr. 424.
296 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXX; tr. 429; cf. *Acts*, VII.
297 Stoop, *Alexander*, 7-8; cf. 12; 26; 28-31.
298 Stoop, *Alexander*, 44; cf. 32. 36.

The author of the life of Abraham Qidunaya and his niece, Mary, described Abraham as a soldier who intended to rescue Mary from the devil: *the blessed man asked to have brought to him an outfit of soldier's clothing and a horse. When these arrived he opened the door of his home (his cell) and came out. He put on the military dress, with a helmet on his head so that his face was covered, mounted the horse and set off--like a spy wanting to spy out some region or town, wearing the local dress to prevent detection: thus did the blessed man wear those clothes whereby he could overcome the adversary.*[299] This story from Abraham's life symbolises his constant struggle against the *Adversary*.[300] Since the devil uses our own limbs as weapons against us, the hermits invente all kinds of mortification to expel the Evil One from their bodies:[301]

The avenging spirit common to men has devised many ways of evil in his z to consign the whole human race to total destruction, and the nurslings of pie have devised many and differing ladders for the ascent into heaven. Some, contesting in companies--myriad are such communities, defeating enumeration--enjoy unageing crowns and attain the desired ascent; others, embracing the solitary life, practising conversation with God alone and receiving no human consolation, enjoy in this way proclamation as victors. Some living in tents and others in cells chant hymns to God; others embrace the life in holes and caves. Many, of whom I have recalled some, have not been induced to have a cave or hole or hut or cell, but giving their bodies to the naked air endure contrasts of temperature, sometimes frozen by unrelieved frost, sometimes burnt by the fire of the sun's rays. Of these again the life is various: some stand all the time, others divided the day between sitting and standing; some, immured in enclosures, shun the company of the many; others, with no such covering, are exposed to all who wish to see them.[302]

John the Solitary states that a hermit could only mature and grow in wisdom through his struggle with Satan; spiritual growth depended on the hermit's patience and endurance in his fight against sin.[303] Thus, the fight of the *athletes of God* was the essence of the eremitic life.[304] It provided every Christian with

299 *Abraham Qidunaya* (Lamy), IV, 20; tr. Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women*, 32.

300 Lamy's life of *Abraham Qidunaya* cannot contain the true history of his life because it is full of legends invented in the fifth century. This theme of the hermit as Christ's soldier, however, was a common one in Christian monastic literature; cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 258.

301 *HR*, *Prol.* 6; tr. 5-6.

302 *HR*, XXVI, 1; tr. 177. On the subject of the hermits' fight with Satan, cf. *HR*, *Prol.* 4-6; III, 4, 17; IV, 7, 12; V, 5; VI, 13; IX, 1-2, 12; XI, 1; XII, 3; XIII. 2; XVIII, 1, 3; XXI, 1, 3, 5, 15, 23, 31; XXIII, 1; XXIV, 2; XXVI, 1, 12, 28; XXVII, 1-2; XXVIII, 2-3; XXVIII, 4; XXIX, 1, 6; XXX, 3, 5; XXXI, 3; cf. Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 185-240.

303 Cf. John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 463-464; Macarius, *Homilies*, XXVII, 20-21.

304 The term 'athlete' is already found in early Christian literature and derives from the terminology of non-Christian Greek philosophy. It was widely used in early Syrian

an example of his duty to combat the world of darkness: *And he* (the Lord) *gave me the rod of his strength, that I might subdue the thoughts of peoples, and lay low the power of mighty men; to make war by his word, and to gain the victory by his might. And the Lord cast down my enemy by his word, and he became like the chaff which the wind carries away.*[305] Tatian's description of such spiritual warfare approximates to the eremitic understanding: *Demons are seen also by 'psychic' men, for at times they show themselves to men, in order to be thought important, or even to do them some harm as enemies, nursing intentions against them like bad friends, or encouraging those like them to worship them.... Along with the matter that is below they war against the matter that is like them. If anyone wishes to master them he must reject matter. Armed with the breastplate'; of 'heavenly spirit' he will be able to protect everything it encompasses.*[306]

3. THE SUFFERINGS OF THE CROSS

Through their mortifications, the hermits were, in a sense, crucified on the cross of Jesus Christ. In this way they could be saved from the world of sin: *They heard the word of the Apostle, which impassioned he spake of himself, 'I am crucified unto the world, and the world with its pleasures is crucified unto me'.*[307] *Therefore they crucified their bodies in opposing all the world's desires; and through tribulation of every kind, their bodies they tormented daily.*[308] The hermit achieved a sort of crucifixion: *As for the eremitic life and labour and practice, which he led and endured and suffered before God secretly and openly, this was evident and manifest to all men: that neither among the ancients nor the moderns was there a mortal body that could endure for one hour and withstand the hardships which the body of the blessed Saint Simeon bore and withstood.*[309]

Christianity to describe the Christian's spiritual fight for Christ's sake. Ignatius of Antioch called upon every Christian to become an athlete: 'Be Sober as God's Athlete', *Poly.* 1, 3; 2, 3; 3, 1. In the *Acts of Thomas* Jesus Christ is referred to as 'our true Athlete, who cannot be hurt, and our holy General, who cannot be conquered', 39; tr. 86; cf. *ibid.* 50. In his fourteenth *Demonstration*, Aphrahat considers the *Qyama* to be athletes fighting against the Evil One; cf. 609, 612. The term is also used in other ascetic works, cf. *Abraham Qidunaya* (Lamy), 23; Theodoret, *HR, Prol.* 1; III, 4; XXI, 1, 2, 35; XXVI, 5, 28; XXVIII, 2; XXXI. 1, 3; *Abraham Qidunaya* (Beck), IV, 21; VII, 2; VIII, 20; X, 11; XI, 5; *Julian Saba*, X, 3; XVI. 2; XIX, 6; XXIII, 13; *Syriac Life*, 539; 575; 576; 581; 596; 610; 617; 635; 638. For more details see Brown, *Society and the Holy*, 138; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 88-89.

305 *Odes of Solomon*, XXIX, 8-10; tr. 720; cf. *ibid.* 8, 7; 9, 6. 9.

306 Tatian, 16; tr 33; cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 34, 39; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 1, 2; 13, 2; *Tral.* 4, 2: 10; *Rom.* 5; *Poly.* 6.

307 *Gal.* 6, 14.

308 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 417-421; tr. 478; cf. Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXVIII, 3; LXX; *Liber Graduum*, 908, 18-19; 920, 20; *Abraham Qidunaya* (Beck), XIII, 11; *Julian Saba*, VII, 14: IX; XIV, 6; XVI, 12; XX, 18.

309 *Syriac Life*, 617; tr. 181.

One may also compare Theodoret: *Therefore these who have followed the path of life through inumerable labors and broken the body in with sweat and toil, who have not experienced the passion of laughter but spent all their life in mourning and tears....*[310] According to John the Solitary, the hermit suffered because his passions had not yet been subdued before the wisdom of God. They were still a source of disharmony. As his liberation from the world of sin and disharmony approached, the sufferings of the hermit became increasingly intense.[311] Like every Christian, a hermit had to endure bodily affliction and persecution as he struggled with the world of sin. The symbol of this struggle and suffering is the Cross of Jesus Christ--the Tree of life and the way of salvation from Death: *A son unto death the fire brought forth; Death feeds up all bodies: the son of Death who surpassed Death, upon the souls of men he f The calf forsook his provender--for men's minds were the food for him. To first Tree that which killed, to it grace brought forth a son, O Cross, offspring the Tree, that didst fight against thy sire! The Tree was the fount of death, the Cross was the fount of life....*[312] The sign of the Cross was depicted in every hermit's cell, for *in every place whither one of them goes, there he sets up his cross, and lo, there is a Church.*[313]

4. MOURNING--FIRE AND BAPTISM

The hermit mourned the sufferings which he endured because of his sins. He mourned also on account of his love for Christ who was still hidden from him. Symeon the Stylite was considered by his biographer to be the *chief of the mourners,*[314] because of his exceptional life of mortification--an act of suffering and love for Christ.[315] The hermit's tears were the price of his repentance and the water which washed away his sins. After her life of prostitution, Mary, Abraham Qidunaya's niece, spent all her time weeping for her sins: *She lived a life of exceptional virtue as, night and day, she begged God in her tears to have pity on her and forgive her the sins she has committed. Very often those who passed that spot at night would stop and listen to the sound of her weeping, and would themselves weep with her and give praise to God.*[316] Mary's

310 *HR, Prol.* 7; tr. 7.

311 Cf. John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 464; cf. *Jn.* 16, 20ff.

312 Ephrem, *Nisibene Hymns*, XIV, 7-8ff; tr. 182. On the sign of the cross and its role in healing and salvation, cf. *Syriac Life*, 515, 521, 532, 588, 591, 627; *Julian Saba*, VIII, 9; XXII, 13; *HR*, I, 5; II, 6; III, 7; VIII, 11; IX, 5, 7; XIII, 9, 13; XXII, 4; Ignatius of Antioch. *Eph.* 9, 1; 18, 1; tr. 11, 2; *Rom.* 7, 8; *Phil.* 8, 2; *Smyr.* 1; *Odes of Solomon*, 27, 1-3; *Acts of Thomas*, 5; 28; 54; *Didascalia*, XXVI, 242.

313 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 230; tr. 475.

314 Cf. Symeon's title in the *Syriac Life*: 'The Heroic Deeds of Mar Simeon, the Chief of the Mourners', 57; tr. 111. Lent translated the word *abile* by *anchorites*, but this is incorrect.

315 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 508, 628-644.

316 *Abraham Qidunaya* (Lamy), 20; tr. 36.

lamentations[317] show that her tears resulted from her struggle with the Evil One; her tears had the power to cleanse the filth of her life of prostitution from her heart: *Receive the weeping and tears of my wretched state, Lord; wipe out the bill*[318] *which I wrote through the Murderer's guile. May he be ashamed because your compassion has wiped it out so that it can never again be exacted.*[319] Abraham, a Syrian hermit who lived in the desert, *was always shedding tears of compunction.*[320] Theodotus did likewise, *for divine longing so worked on him, and wounded him with darts so great in kind and number, that night and day he poured forth tears of compunction.*[321] Fundamentally, the hermit's tears were the result of his love for Jesus Christ, for whom he renounced the world: *She* (Domnina) *has often taken my hand* (Theodoret's) *and after placing it on her yes, released it so soaked that my very hand dripped tears. What discourse ould give due praise to a woman who with such wealth of philosophy weeps nd wails and sighs like those living in extreme poverty? For it is fervent love for God that begets these tears, firing the mind to divine contemplation, stinging it with pricks and urging it on to migrate from here.*[322] Agrippa also shed tears because of the fire of love: *he continually enjoyed contemplation of the divine beauty, and consumed by the firebrand of that love wet his cheeks with continual tears.*[323]

Chrysostom described the hermit's dwelling as a house of mourning: *Monasteries are indeed houses of mourning. There is sackcloth and ashes, there is solitude, there is no laughter, no pressure of worldly business. There is fasting, and lying upon the ground; there is no impure savour of rich food, no blood shed, no tumult, no disturbance, or crowding....*[324] The time spent in this transitory world should be used for mourning and fasting, for much compunction and fervent tears.[325] Mourning was required of all those who wished to join the eremitic life. In the *Antony Life*, the superior of the monastery required of Symeon continuous prayer, suffering, humility, fasting, and mourning as the condition of his acceptance into the community.[326] Yet it was not only hermits who were obliged to mourn; it was the duty of every sinner. Thus, if every hermit was a mourner, not every mourner was a hermit. In time, however, the

317 Cf. Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women*, 37-39.
318 *Col.* 2, 14.
319 Brock and Harvey, *Holy Women*, 39.
320 *HR*, III, 17; tr. 44.
321 *HR*, V, 7; tr. 61. Cf. *Abraham Qidunaya* (Beck), II, 5-6; IX, 11 ff.; XII, 22; *Julian Saba*. II, 2; III, 2; XIX, 7ff.
322 *HR*, XXX, 2; tr. 187.
323 *HR*, IV, 8; tr. 53.
324 Chrysostom, *Tim.* XIV; tr. 456.
325 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LV, 6, 8.
326 Festugière, *Antioche*, 493 (3); cf. *ibid.* 496 (12).

word *abila* (mourner) gradually came to be used more of the hermit than of the lay-Christian.[327] The fire of divine love[328] made the hermit mourn for his own sins and the sins of the world: *When they prostrate themselves in prayer, the earth they moisten with their tears.*[329] As a sinner, the hermit's tears were a necessary token of his sincere expression of love for Christ, just as the waters of baptism symbolise a rebirth in the heavenly world.[330] In the same sense, the hermit's mourning was a new baptism in Christ. This is clearly stated in the *Didascalia.*[331] The *Liber Graduum* also considers tearful prayer to be an act of repentance and love:

On the subject of tears, which I mentioned: a person may weep for his friend because he loves him and he is distant from him. If, then, someone far away weeps for his friend, it may be either out of his love, or out of his sorrow; but once he actually sees his dear friend, he will also weep when they meet face to face, and his tears will pour out over his friend's neck, in the sight of anyone who happens to be nearby. It is obvious to everyone that these are tears of joy; for when such a person sees this dear friend whom he had not been expecting to see, he will weep and sob with an abundance of tears. It is the same with people who sin and so are distanced from our Lord and his righteousness: they weep with sorrow, just as someone weeps when he is far from his friend and feels sorrow concerning him. Such people feel sorrow for their sins, since they fear the judgement of our Lord, and they weep so that God may have compassion on them and forgive them. If they then turn away from their sins and are justified, they can draw close to our Lord and their tears turn to ones of joy. And when they become without sins and are delivered from sin, they weep with joy as they encounter our Lord, just like the person who sees his dear friend whom he had not expected to see, and he falls on his neck, weeping over him with sobs and tears of joy. Accordingly, in our case we should be eager to try to become without any sins, asking our Lord to deliver us from sin, just as Paul said: 'What a wretched person I am! Who can save me from this body of death, apart from the grace of God which is in our Lord Jesus Christ?'[332] It must be stressed, however, that in the beatitudes Christ entreated every Christian to mourn.[333]

327 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 283; *Ephrem*, 71.
328 Cf. *HR*, IV, 4; IV, 8; XXVII, 3; XXIX, 2, 7; John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 465.
329 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 473; tr. 479; cf. *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Lamy), 19.
330 Cf. Beck, *Sermones* IV; cf. Edsman, 'Baptème de feu'.
331 Cf. *Didascalia*, V, 62; VI 63-64; VII, 77; XI, 134; XV, 166; XXI, 209, 216-217.
332 Cf. *Liber Graduum*, XVIII, 2.
333 *Mt.* 5, 4.

5. STANDING

Standing was a form of mortification practised by many Syrian hermits. The stylites and open-air hermits were pioneers--Symeon spent *day and night standing within view of all.* Standing could be alternated with bending if the latter were treated as a kind of prostration.[334] According to the *Syriac Life*, Symeon committed himself to perpetual standing from the outset: *So he added to his former labour tenfold, and made himself a mandra, standing openly day and night while everyone gazed at him.*[335] Theodoret relates that when Symeon grew old, standing became so difficult that he was obliged to attach himself to his column: *But when he took his stand on the pillar, he was not willing to come down, but contrived his standing posture differently: it was by attaching a beam to the pillar and tying himself to the beam with cords that he lasted the forty days (of Lent).*[336] Symeon was so skilled in the art of moritification that he invented an alternative posture: *During the public festivals he displays another form of endurance: after the setting of the sun until it comes again to the eastern horizon, stretching out his hands to heaven he stands all night, neither beguiled by sleep nor overcome by exertion.*[337] Like Symeon, Baradatus spent all his time standing and stretching out his hands: *He stands all the time, stretching out his hands and hymning the God of the universe.*[338] Theodoret notes that standing was a practice adopted by many hermits: *Some stand all the time, others divide the day between sitting and standing.*[339] Among these were Abba,[340] James of Cyrrhestica,[341] John,[342] and Moses,[343]. Standing was thought of as the posture of resurrection and that of the angels. In particular, it was the position of Jesus Christ, who did not fall in the struggle agaist sin: *Thou who standest up in contest, for us and makest us victorious in them all.*[344] The same idea is repeated in the *Odes of Solomon*: *He never falls, but stands fast.*[345]

6. IRON

The hermits used fetters of iron to torture Satan who dwelt in their earthly lusts: *He howled under their combs of iron, because they tore him by their labours.*[346] They reminded the hermit of his fight against the Evil One who

334 *HR*, XXVI, 22.
335 *Syriac Life*, 573-574; tr. 153; cf. *Antony Life*, 496 (12).
336 *HR*, XXVI, 9; tr. 164.
337 *HR*, XXVI, 24; tr. 171; cf. *Syriac Life*, 516.
338 *HR*, XXVII, 3; tr. 178.
339 *HR*, XXVII, 1; tr. 177.
340 Cf. *HR*, IV, 12.
341 Cf. *HR*, XXI, 5.
342 Cf. *HR*, XXIII, 1.
343 Cf. *HR*, XXIII, 2.
344 *Acts of Thomas*, 39; tr. 85-86.
345 *Odes of Solomon*, XII, 6 tr. 703.

always sought to distract him from God.[347] Theodoret relates how James of Cyrrhestica was laden with heavy iron chains while suffering from a fever: *I tried gently to rub his back. It was then that I perceived the great load of iron that bound his waist and his neck; and other chains, two in front and two behind, extending obliquely from the circle around his neck to the circle below, and forming the shape of the letter X, connected the two circles to each other, both in front and behind; and beneath his clothing his arms bore other bonds of this kind round his elbows.*[348] For the hermits, the suffering caused by iron chains were a part of their training for the great contest against Satan. Theodoret notes that iron was a mode of mortification for men and for women. Wom contended with the Evil One on equal terms with men, sometimes e surpassing them: *They* (Marana and Cyra) *wear iron, and carry such a we that Cyra, with her weaker body, is bent down to the ground and is quite una to straighten her body.... I have often been inside the door in order to see them.... And so I have seen that weight of iron which even a well-built man could not carry. After long entreaty I succeeded in getting it off them for the nonce, but after our departure they again put it on their limbs--round the neck, the collar, round the waist the belt, and on hands and feet the chains assigned to them.*[349]

Most hermits, if not all, used irons in the process of repentance. Eusebius, who imitated Marcianus, *was wearing one hundred and twenty pounds of iron, he laid on himself the other fifty of the most godly Agapetus and also added the eighty of the great Marcianus.*[350] He punished himself with irons after he failed to concentrate on God's word: *When the inspired Ammianus had read out the Gospel passage and was seeking its interpretation, the great Eusebius told him to repeat the reading. When the other replied, 'In your delight over the ploughmen you were doubtless not listening', he made a rule that his eyes were never to look at that plain nor feast upon the beauty of the heavens or the choir of the stars; but using a very narrow path, whose breadth is said to have been a span, to get to the house of prayer, he did not thereafter allow himself to step outside it. They say that he lived on for more than forty years after making this rule. In order that, in addition to this resolve, some duress should compel him to this, he bound his waist with an iron belt and attached a very heavy collar to his neck and then used a further chain to connect the belt to the collar, so that bent down in this way he would be forced uninterruptedly to stoop to the ground. Such was the penalty he imposed on himself for looking at those farm-workers.*[351]

346 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 473.
347 Cf. *HR*, IV, 6
348 *HR*, XXI, 8; tr. 136; cf. *ibid.* XXVI, 10.
349 *HR*, XXIX, 5; tr. 184.
350 *HR*, III, 19; tr. 45.

Polychronius wore a wooden yoke at night to vanquish his pride: *Polychronius, having with the other passions expelled ambition from his soul and trod down the tyranny of vainglory, was always keen to hide his labors. Iron he could not bear to wear, fearing to derive some harm therefrom, from the soul becoming inflamed with pride. But telling someone to bring him a very heavy root of oak, as if needing it for some other purpose, he would at night place it on his shoulders and pray with this burden, as also during the day when he enjoyed leisure; if someone arrived and knocked on the door, he would hide it away in some place. Someone who saw it told me and wishing to discover how great was the weight, I found I could scarcely lift it up with both hands. On seeing me, he told me to put it down; but I on the contrary begged to take it away, in order to remove the cause of his labor. But when I saw he was distressed, I yielded to his desire for victory.*[352]

Symeon the Stylite remains unique in the history of Syrian monasticism. The suffering he endured--his pursuit of crucifixion--has no equal in the history of the Church: *He ordered a circular enclosure to be made. After procuring an iron chain of twenty cubits, nailing one end to a great rock and fixing the other to his right foot so that not even if he wished could he go outside these limits, he lived all the time inside, thinking of heaven and compelling himself to contemplate what lies above the heavens--for the iron chain did not hinder the flight of his thought. But when the wonderul Meletius, who had at that time been appointed to supervise the territory of the city of Antioch and was a wise man of brilliant intelligence and gifted with shrewdness, told him that the iron was superfluous, since the will was sufficient to impose on the body the bonds of reasoning, he yielded and accepted the advice with compliance: And bidding a smith be called, he told him to sever the chain. When a piece of leather, which had been tied to his leg to prevent the iron injuring his body, had to be torn apart (for it had been sewn together), people saw, they said, more than twenty large bugs lurking in it; and the wonderful Meletius said he had seen this....*[353]

Abba, the Arab monk, *was girt round his waist with a heavy chain*,[354] while Theodosius carried a *load of iron on his neck, his loins, and both his hands.*[355] Romanus' acts of mortification resemble those of Theodosius, in particular his chains of iron.[356] Acepsimas was also laden *with a quantity of iron*,[357] and John endured similar torments.[358] By contrast, Rabbula forbade the coenobitic

351 *HR*, IV, 6; tr. 52.
352 *HR*, XXIV, 6; tr. 156.
353 *HR*, XXVI, 10; tr. 164; cf. *Antony Life*, 494-496.
354 *HR*, IV, 12; tr. 56.
355 *HR*, X, 2; tr. 89.
356 Cf. *HR*, XI, 1, 3.
357 *HR*, XV, 2; tr. 114.

hermits the use of irons.[359] Ignatius of Antioch and Judas Thomas became prisoners for Christ's sake and were fettered with irons.[360] In the *Odes of Solomon*, the prisoners' gate--the gate of sinners--is made of *bars of iron*.[361] The *Didascalia* echoes the *Odes of Solomon*,[362] adding that the sinner is bound by iron: *And now, O Lord, behold, I am justly afflicted; and I am vexed as I deserve.... I am bound and bent down by the multitude of bands of iron, so that I may not lift up my head: nor am I worthy to lift my eyes and look and see the height of heaven, because of the multitude of the malice of my wickedness. For I have done evil things before Thee....*[363] The *Didascalia* also says that the disease, i.e. sin, which cannot be cured by normal treatment needs iron for it to heal quickly.[364] Thus iron in the Syrian Church has two meanings: it fetters the repentant sinner, and is the best treatment to heal man of his sin.

7. FOOD AND FASTING

a. Meaning and Practice

According to Marcianus, true fasting was not a case of eating less or fasting for a few days; rather it consisted of being constantly hungry. The aim was to keep the stomach free from heavy burden, and so to release the mind from material cares. The hermit would thus be able to concentrate continually on spiritual matters: *His food* (Marcianus') *was bread alone, and this taken according to measure: the measure was such as to satisfy the need not even of a child just separated from the breast, for they say that this pound of bread, divided into four, was distributed over four days, with one portion assigned to each day. He had resolved to eat each day in the evening, and never to experience satiety, but to be always hungry and always thirsty, supplying the body with the bare necessities of life; for he used to say that he who takes food only at several days' interval performs the Master's liturgy in a weak state on days of fast, while on a day when he eats food he naturally takes more and burdens the stomach, and this, weighed down, makes the soul more sluggish at keeping vigil. It was therefore better, he said, to take food each day and never expect satiety, since the true fast is perpetual deficiency. This man of God persevered in laying down this rule; and although he had a very big body, being indeed the biggest and most handsome of all the men of his time, it was with little food that he nourished it.*[365] Eusebius of Teleda *ordered his companions to*

358 Cf. *HR*, XXIII, 1.

359 Cf. Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 285.

360 Cf. Ignatius, *Eph.* 11, 2; *Mag.* 1, 2; 12; *Tral.* 5, 2; 12, 2; *Rom.* 1,1; 4, 3; *Phil.* 5, 1; 8, 1; *Smyr.* , 10; 11, 1; *Poly.* 2, 3; *Acts of Thomas*, 54; 108, 8.

361 Cf. *Odes of Solomon*, XVIII, 9.

362 Cf. *Didascalia*, VII, 89.

363 *Didascalia*, VII, 90-91; tr. 86-87.

364 *Didascalia*, XXVI, 264.

partake every day.[366] Publius and his community may have followed the same rule.[367] The Shepherds ate daily, and Chrysostom confirms that the coenobitic hermits had a meal in the evenings[368] which consisted mainly of bread, salt and water; some hermits added oil, and the *weakly have also herbs and pulse.*[369] *Antony's life* of Symeon records this practice.[370] It would appear that one meal a day was a part of the early Syrian coenobitic routine--a simple supper, prepared by the hermits themselves. But what was prescribed for coenobitic communities did not apply to the solitary hermits who observed no common rule concerning food. Julian Saba took *food once a week... he had bread made of barley and indeed of bran, as relish he had salt, as a most pleasant drink fresh water from springs, and this not proportioned to satiety, but limited to what was needed for the food swallowed down beforehand.*[371] Romanus' food was *bread and salt and is drink spring-water.*[372] In the case of Maris, *bread and a little salt supplied is need for food.* Like Julian, he ate once a week.[373] The disciples who subsequently joined Maris took the same food, though it would appear that they ate every day.[374] Avitus remarked to Marcianus: *I do not know that I have ever taken food before the evening, and I often continue without food for two or three days together.*[375] Eusebius of Teleda *took food every three or four days,*[376] while other hermits of Teleda *partook of their frugal food every other day.*[377] Peter the Galatian drank cold water and ate only bread, *and this not every day; remaining one day without food, he would take food on the next.*[378] In the case of Zeno, *one piece of bread provided for two days*; it was brought to him by one of his acquaintances. *As for water, he himself brought it, drawing it at a distance.*[379] Symeon Stylites ate only *once a week.*[380]

365 *HR*, III, 3; tr. 38; Cf. *HR*, VIII, 3; XX, 3.
366 *HR*, IV, 5; tr. 51.
367 Cf. *HR*, V, 3.
368 Cf. Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LV, 6; *Tim.* XIV.
369 Cf. Chrysostom, *Mt.* LXX; *Tim.* XIV; cf. *HR*, II, 4, 13; VIII, 3.
370 Cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 494, 6.
371 *HR*, II, 2; tr. 23.
372 *HR*, XI, 1; tr. 94;
373 *HR*, XX, 3; tr. 132; cf. *HR*, II, 13.
374 Cf. *HR*, II, 4-5.
375 *HR*, III, 12; tr. 43.
376 *HR*, IV, 5; tr. 51.
377 *HR*, IV, 12; tr. 55.
378 *HR*, IX, 3; tr. 82.
379 *HR* XII, 3; tr. 97; Eusebius of Asikha obtained his food from a friend; cf. *HR*, XVIII, 1; for Salamanes, cf. *HR*, XIX, 1; Limnaeus, cf. *HR*, XXII, 7; Marana and Cyra, cf. *HR*, XXIX, 3; for Macedonius, cf. *HR*, XIII, 3.
380 *HR*, XXVI, 22.

Some hermits did not eat cooked food, only green herbs, vegetables and soaked seeds: *They, instead of delicacies feed on grasses and wild roots, and when it is time for (their) meal, (they) pick (their) herbs and chew them. Of every herb (they) pick, (they) taste of it with faith; and the rest which afterward remain (they) leave behind and go (their) way. For (they) have heard that saying, 'Take ye no thought for the morrow'.* The same *memra* says: *Instead of a table at the hour of taking food, they place upon their knee the herbs whereof they make their meal. Their drink is not that of wine, but of water only.*[381] The Shepherds ate nothing but grass, while James of Nisibis *has food not sown and produced with labor but that which grows up by itself: it was by gathering the natural fruits of wild trees and edible plants and vegetables that he provided his bo with the bare necessities for life, rejecting the use of fire.*[382] Symeon the El ate only dates which were brought to him by a lion.[383] Sabinus, a disciple Marcianus, *took neither bread nor anything cooked; his food was meal soaked water. It was his custom to prepare together all the food for the month in such a way that it went mouldy and emitted a great stench. The character of such food was intended to blunt his bodily appetites, and by the stench of the food extinguish pleasure.*[384]

Macedonius *used neither bread nor pulses, but ground barley, merely soaked in water.*[385] Abraham *took neither bread nor pulses nor greens cooked by fire and not even water,*[386] *which is considered by those reputed clever about these things to be the first of the elements in utility; but it was lettuce, chicory, celery, and all plants of this kind that he made his food and drink, rendering superfluous the skills of baking and cooking. In the fruit-season fruit supplemented his needs. his food he took after the evening liturgy.*[387] Eusebius of Asikha lived on *chick-peas and beans soaked in water; and sometimes he ate dried figs, trying thereby in some way to support the weakness of his body.*[388] James of Cyrrhestica,[389] Polychronius, Moses, Damian,[390] and Domnina[391] all ate soaked lentils, which was their only food.

381 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 65-85; 233-237; tr. 472, 475.

382 *HR*, I, 2; tr. 13. It would seem that such natural foods were used by many hermits in Mesopotamia, especially in the region of Nisibis.

383 Cf. *HR*, VI, 9-10.

384 *HR*, III, 21; tr. 46.

385 *HR*, XIII, 3; tr. 101.

386 Abba did not drink water, cf. *HR*, IV, 12; nor did many other hermits cf. Chrysostom, *Mtt.* XXI, 5.

387 *HR*, XVII, 6; tr. 122.

388 *HR*, XVIII, 1; tr. 126.

389 Cf. *HR*, XXI, 12.

390 Cf. *HR*, XXIV, 5.

391 Cf. *HR*, XXX, 2.

Alexander the Sleepless (Akoimetos) did not allow his brethren to have any good meal, for it was considered contrary to the spirit of the ascetic life: *Out of sympathy for the host of brothers' earlier suffering, the most zealous among them wanted to give them a rest; and contrary to his will, they made various foods which they knew were agreable to the brothers. Desiring to teach them that they were above the passions, he waited until they had everything carefully prepared and then suddenly, as was his wont, took up the parchments of the Holy Gospel and went on his way saying, 'Glory to God in the highest and earth peace, goodwill among men' (for it was his custom to to do this when he wanted to move on), ordering them to touch nothing of what had been prepared. So they 'eft everything that had been made, and went on their way.*[392] Alexander ıowever believed that God provides for His servants the necessary food, and ,ometimes the pagans were more generous to God's servants than those who are Christians in name only: *The blessed one went through all the desert with the brethren who sang without ceasing, and they came to the city of Solomon which is named in the Book of Kings, Palmyra, which he build in the desert. The citizens were Jews, and Christian in name only; they saw the host of brothers afar off, and as they approached they shut the city gates, saying to one other, 'Who can feed all these people? If we they come into our city, we shall all starve'. When the saint saw this, he glorified God, saying, 'It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in man'.*[393] *Take courage, brothers, for the Lord visits us whence we do not expect it'. The barbarians of those parts showed them exceptional charity. They had spent three days in the desert when, as the saint had said, God sent some camel-drivers who were four stations away from the city, all carrying food. They received it and, when they had given thanks to God, they also partook. There was so much left over that even when they had received it, they found themselves giving to the poor of the city out of what had been sent to them.*[394]

What other practices did the Syrian hermits incorporate in their fasting? Some hermits, perhaps all, fasted for the entire forty days of Lent. Symeon Stylites fasted totally, not even drinking water, during Lent.[395] In addition to fasting in Lent and eating only once a week for the rest of the year, from time to time he would eat soaked lentils *once in two weeks, or even once in three, while he constrainted himself with severe effort.*[396] Symeon's attitude is also exemplified in Bar Sauma, who was known as the *son of fasting* on account of his severity.[397] Marana and Cyra imitated Moses and Daniel in their fasting:

392 Stoop, *Alexander*, 36.
393 *Ps.* 117,8.
394 Stoop, *Alexander*, 35.
395 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 517, 523, 527, 549, 585, 617ff; *HR*, XXVI, 7, 9.
396 *Syriac Life*, 519-520; tr. 119; cf. *ibid.* 514.

Emulating the fast of the inspired Moses,[398] *they have three times spent the same length of time (forty days) without food, for it was at the end of forty days that they took a little nourishment. Three times also have they emulated the abstinence from eating of the godly Daniel, completing three weeks and only then supplying nourishment to the body....*[399] Eusebius of Asikha needed only *fifteen dried figs to get through the seven weeks of the holy fast,*[400] while James of Cyrrehestica fasted for periods in excess of a week to expel demons which can manifest themselves in food.[401] The hermits' life in the transitory world was *one of mourning and fasting,*[402] through which the hermits educated their flesh and cleansed themselves of sin: *And because they saw lust in the world, they laid hold of pure fasting, so that through fasting they might acquire wings, where to soar to Heaven.*[403]

b. Animal products and Wine

For the hermits, food was regarded as part of the practices of mortification;[404] meat, all animal products, and wine had no place in their diet. Yet one should note the exceptional case of Malchus, who was obliged to drink camel's milk and to eat meat while he was held captive by the Arabs, for these were the only foods available in the desert[405] Another case of a hermit who ate meat and drank wine is that of Abraham Qidunaya, who became a 'fool for Christ.' He ate meat and drank wine like the sinners in order to save them. Thus, when he speaks to the tavern keeper: *Take this, my friend, and prepare us a first-class meal so that we can enjoy ourselves today with this lass* (Mary). *I have come a long way to see her..., and without any hesitation, he ate (meat) and drank (wine)....*[406] The strict vegetarian diet of the early Syrian hermits was not adhered to in the early Syrian Church in general. Syrian Christians commonly ate meat and drink wine. According to Theodoret, Macedonius the hermit did

397 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 200-201.

398 Cf. *Ex.* 24, 18.

399 *HR*, XXIX, 7; tr. 184. Marana and Cyra (and also Symeon) confirm the importance of biblical practices of fasting; cf. *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Beck), II, 4; *Julian Saba*, XX, 9.

400 *HR*, XVIII, 4; tr. 127.

401 Cf. *HR*, XXI, 23. Symeon the Elder spent 'the whole cycle of a week' fasting on top of the mountain where Moses saw God, cf. *HR*, VI, 12.

402 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LV, 6; tr. 342.

403 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 393; tr. 477; cf. *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Lamy), 25; Jerome, *Malchus*, 316(3); Chysostom, *Priest.* VI, 5; *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Beck), IX; XIII; *Julian Saba*, II, 2; XIV, 3; *Liber Graduum*, 908-909.

404 Cf. *HR*, XXXI, 2, 3.

405 Cf. Jerome, *Malchus*, 316 (4); 317 (8).

406 Cf. *Abraham Qidunaya* (Lamy), 22-23; tr. 33. This story probably not true. There is no evidence that Abraham Qidunaya behaved in such a way and nothing in the earlier hymns on *Abraham Qidunaya* (Beck) corresponds with this strange story. In my opinion the story was associated with Abraham Qidunaya erroneously.

not object to lay people eating meat and continuing with their normal styles of life.[407] Before he embarked upon his eremitic life Symeon Stylites ate meat and drank wine like an ordinary member of his society.[408] As a counterweight to all that has been concerning eremitic abstinence, one should recall Libanius' description of the monks: *this black-robed tribe eats more than elephants, and, by the quantities of drink they consume, weary those that accompany their drinking with the singing of hymns....*[409] The Emperor Julian accused the Syrian Christians of being an ungodly people on account of their eating habits: *Why in your diet are you not as pure as the Jews, and why do you say that we ought to eat everything 'even as the green herb', putting your faith in Peter, because, as the Galileans say, he declared, 'What God hath cleansed, that make not thou common?'*[410] *What proof is there of this, that of old God held certain things bominable, but now has made them pure?*[411] The *Didascalia* states that what Peter was allowed to 'kill and eat'[412] should be the rule for every believer because all things are cleansed by God.[413] Christians, however, were forbidden to eat the meat of animals which had been sacrificed to pagan gods; this was believed to be impure meat, corrupted by the evil spirits.[414]

Despite the general acceptance of meat, the vegetarian diet had a strong following in the early tradition of the Syrian Church. Theophilus of Antioch, for example, believed that, in Paradise, Adam and Eve were vegetarians: *He commanded that from the beginning man should have a diet derived from the fruits of the earth and seeds and herbs and fruit trees, and that animals were to have the same diet as man so that they too would eat of all the seeds of the earth.*[415] Theophilus, moreover, said that those who kept the *law of God* ate only seeds from the earth, while those who transgressed began to eat flesh and to kill.[416] According to Theophilus, therefore, only sinners ate flesh. This idea, however, met with opposition in the *Didascalia* which says that even those who abstain from flesh and wine are in the 'second legislation', which is still the state of sinners: *For some, namely, were observing holiness* (qaddishuta), *and some abstained from flesh and from wine, and some from swine, and they were keeping (something) of all the bonds which are in the second legislation.*[417] Vegetarian food had two symbolic meanings: it was thought to be the food of

407 Cf. *HR*, XIII, 9.
408 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 514.
409 Libanius, *Oration*, XXX, 9; tr. 107.
410 *Acts*, 10, 15.
411 Wright, *Emperor Julian*, III, 407-415.
412 Cf. *Acts*, 10, 10-17.
413 Cf. *Didascalia*, XXIV, 235.
414 Cf. *Didache*, 6, 3; Theophilus of Antioch II, 16-17, 24; III, 5; Tatian, 23, 25, 34.
415 Theophilus of Antioch II, 18; tr. 57.
416 Cf. Theophilus of Antioch, II, 16-25ff; III, 5.
417 *Didascalia*, XXIV, 231; tr. 214.

man in Paradise before the Fall, as well as the food of repentant sinners who are under the 'second legislation'. These two meanings agree perfectly with the hermits' interpretation of their vocation. They regarded themselves as repentant sinners and their way of life as an imitation of that led by man before the Fall. Tatian's harmony of the Four Gospels, the *Diatessaron*, transformed John the Baptist into one who ate *milk and honey*, rather than the meat of locusts.[418]

Tatian also changed certain words in the Gospels which refer to the vine and to wine.[419] The Bible forbids priests to drink wine before they perform the service of God in the tabernacle.[420] It is also proscribed for to those who count themselves devoted to God, the Nazarites.[421] It is, moreover, a commandmer for the people of God during their time of sin and corruption--the time of t 'second legislation'.[422] Daniel, for example, says that during his time mourning and repentance he did not taste *pleasant bread, neither flesh n wine...*[423] In Rabbula one encounters a rule comparable with these Old Testament restrictions: *The priests and deacons and the bnai qeiama and bnat qeiama shall keep themselves far from wine and meat; but if there is any among them who is infirm in body, he may use a little, as it is written; those, however, who become drunken or who enter taverns, shall be expelled from the Church.*[424] As a man dedicated to Christ, Judas Thomas did not partake of the feast of those who spent their time eating and drinking; rather he executed a mission of repentance and served his Church among converted sinners. Accordingly, he did not eat like sinners, but took only *bread and salt from evening to evening and water.*[425] The *Didascalia* required fasting Christians to eat *only bread and salt and water*. Nor should they eat anything on Friday or

418 Brock, 'Asceticism', 5; 'The Baptist's Diet in Syriac Sources', 113ff.

419 'Several corrections reflect Tatian's strict attitude towards the use of wine which he condemned for Christians. Even the word 'wine' had to be stricken from the biblical vocabulary. We notice that the word in *Jn.* XV, 1 'I am the true vine' has been modified so that his text reads 'I am the tree of the fruit of the truth'. The same ascetic conviction appears in his handling of another passage. In the episode of the Last Supper, Matthew and Mark report that after he gave bread and the cup, Jesus said that he will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when he drinks it a new in his Father's kingdom (*Mt.* 26, 29; *Mk.* 14, 25), a statement which in a shorter form is placed after the first cup in Luke's account (*Lk.* 22, 18). Again we feel the strength of the ascetic spirit when we notice how this passage annoyed Tatian. He deleted this statement from the text and excluded the idea that wine will be drunk in the Kingdom. The text of the *Diatessaron*, as it appears in the Armenian translation of the commentary of Ephrem, runs: 'from now on I whall not drink from this generation of vine until the kingdom of my father'', Vööbus, *History of Ascticism* I, 41-42.

420 Cf. *Lev.* 10, 9; *Is.* 24, 9; *Ez.* 44, 21.

421 Cf. *Judg.* 13, 4, 7, 14; *1Sam.* 1, 15; *Lk.* 7, 33.

422 Cf. *Jer.* 35, 6ff.

423 *Dan.* 10, 3.

424 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 42, 23; 47, 46.

425 *Acts of Thomas*, 104; tr. 118; cf. *ibid.* 5-7, 20, 28.

Saturday.[426] Although encratite elements may be discerned in several of the Syrian ascetic sources, especially in Tatian, encratism never had much influence on the Syrian Church as a whole.

c. Fasting in the early Syrian tradition

Fasting had been an obligation laid upon Syrian Christians from the outset, and the eremitic fasting was based on Church tradition. The *Didache* urged Christians to *fast for those that persecute (them).*[427] Similarly, those about to be baptised should prepare themselves by fasting: *And before the baptism let the baptiser and him who is to be baptised fast, and any others who are able. And thou shalt bid him who is to be baptised to fast one or two days before.*[428] The *Didache* asked Christians to fast for part of each week: *Let not your fast be with the hypocrites, for they fast on Mondays and Thursdays, but do you fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.*[429] In the *Acts of Thomas*, healing was preceded by a fast,[430] *for the repentant sinner should cleanse himself from sin.*[431] Christians, however, did not fast on Sunday because it is the Lord's day.[432] In the *Didascalia*, fasting is considered to be like irons, capable of healing incurable ins. The bishop is advised: *On this account, as a compassionate physician, heal all those who sin. And distribute with all skill, and offer healing for the remedy of their lives. And you shall not be ready to cut off the members of the Church, but use the word of bandages and the admonitions of fomentations and the compresses of intercession. But if the ulcer goes deep and decreases his flesh, nourish it and counter-act it with healing medicine. And if there be filth in it, cleanse it with sharp medicine, that is with a word of reproof. But if the flesh be over-swollen, reduce it and counter-act it with sharp medicine, that is with the threat of judgement. But if gangrene should be in it, cauterize it with branding irons, that is, with incisions of much fasting cut away and clear out the foulness of the ulcer.*[433] Thus, every Christian was obliged to fast,[434] in particular on Wednesdays and Fridays, though not on Sundays. Fasting was also thought to be a means for the conversion of all sinners.[435] The fast during Pascha (Holy Week) was the most important one in the early Syrian Church. It was performed in a manner comparable with some eremitic practices: *On this account you shall fast in the days of the Pascha from the tenth, which is the second day of the*

426 *Didascalia*, XXI, 214; tr. 198-199; cf. *ibid.* VII, 89.
427 *Didache*, 1, 3; tr. 309.
428 *Didache*, 7, 4; tr. 321.
429 *Didache*, 8, 1; tr. 321.
430 *Acts of Thomas*, 81.
431 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 90, 95-96.
432 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 29.
433 *Didascalia*, X, 121.
434 Cf. *Didascalia*, XV, 165; XIX, 186.
435 *Didascalia*, XXI, 207-209;

week. And you shall be sustained only by bread and salt and water, at the ninth hour, until the fifth day of the week. On the Friday, however, and on the Sabbath, fast entirely, and taste nothing. You shall assemble together and watch and keep vigil all night with prayers an intercessions, and with the reading of the prophets, and with the Gospel and with the psalms with fear and trembling and with assiduous supplication, until the third hour in the night after the Sabbath. And then break your fasts.[436] The *Didascalia* gives the following reasons why Christians should fast on Friday and Saturday: *On Friday the people killed themselves in crucifying our Savior; and again on the Sabbath, because it is the sleep of our Lord...,*[437] The *Didascalia* treats the Lenten fast as an apostolic commandment to all Christians.[438]

8. VIGIL

In view of their ambition to become inhabitants of the kingdom of heave the hermits' struggle against sleep was as important a way as any other c combatting sin: *At night he* (Publius) *would come to each door suddenly, and if he found someone awake and hymning God, he would depart again in silence; but if he perceived someone fast asleep, he would knock on the door with his hand and rebuke the sleeper with his tongue for giving the body more than it needed.*[439] Zebinas and Polychronius spent *all night in vigil in standing posture from the following*, in spite of their old age.[440] Mary spent her nights in mourning and supplication,[441] and, before his entry into the eremitic life, Symeon the Stylite passed *the nights in the Church, and from dawn until dark he was on his knees, and from dark till dawn he was standing in prayer. And he was many times in these exercises, those who were of the same age as he were watching him, that they might see if he moved his feet, and changed from the spot in which he stood. But no one could find this in his case.*[442] As a hermit, Symeon's labour of vigils increased steadily until he could stay awake almost all of the time: *When his brothers finished the nocturns and lay down to rest, he would hang a stone about his neck all the time that his companions were resting. When it was time for them to arise, he untied the stone from his neck, and stood with them for the service. But on one of the nights, when he had put the stone on his neck, he was tempted by Satan and sleep fell upon him. Of a sudden he collapsed and fell headlong, and his head was wounded.... Afterwards he procured a certain round piece of wood, and stood upon it at night,so that if he chanced to fall asleep, the piece of wood would roll from under him.*[443] Most

436 *Didascalia*, XXI, 214; tr. 199.
437 *Didascalia*, XXI, 215; tr. 200; cf. *ibid.* 216-217.
438 *Didascalia*, III, 43; tr. 38; Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 86.
439 *HR*, V, 3; tr. 59.
440 *HR*, XXIV, 4; tr. 155; cf. *ibid.* XXIV, 2.
441 Cf. *Abraham Qidunaya* (Lamy), 25.
442 *Syriac Life*, 516; tr. 116-117.

hermits mentioned in early Syrian literature did not need much sleep. This is particularly true of the solitary hermits who appear to have had less than two or three hours sleep a night.[444] One reason for their vigil was to torture the Evil One, who liked darkness and those who slept in it: *He* (the Evil One) *was tormented by them at every hour, because they hindered him by their nightly vigils.*[445] Alexander the Sleepless established the first eremitic community that kept a continuous vigil. They praised God unceasingly in imitation of the angels in heaven.[446] Watchfulness was kept in imitation of the eternal, the watchmen, or angels of heaven. When they did sleep the hermits lay down on the ground with only the grass beneath them: *And for a couch they have grass only beneath them, like as Christ did when making a dinner in the wilderness.*[447] *And instead of gentle cushions, they rest their heads upon a stone.*[448] In sum, watchfulness was part of the very spirit of Church-life and a cause to be prosecuted by all those who wished to remain disciples of Christ.[449]

9. CLOTHES

Winter and summer, the hermit wore a single garment which was his only worldly property: *It is related that Anthemius (who later became prefect and consul), when he had made his journey to Persia on being made ambassador,*[450] *brought him* (Aphrahat) *a tunic woven by the Persians and said, 'Father, knowing that to every human being his own homeland is sweet, and the fruits produced there most pleasant, I have brought you from your homeland this tunic, and I beg you to accept it in exchange for your blessing'. The other told him, first of all, to put it on the bench, and then, after conversation on other topics, professed to be at a loss, with his mind torn in two directions. On Anthemius asking the reason he replied: 'I have always chosen to live with a single companion, and I have imposed a rule on myself to refuse totally to live with two. For sixteen years someone has been living with me who is agreeable: and now there has arrived a compatriot of mine who wants to live with me and*

443 *Syriac Life*, 520; tr. 119.

444 Cf. *HR*, IV, 12; VII, 1; XVII, 2, 6; XXI, 20, 25, 34; XXIII, 2; XXIV, 1, 4-5; XXVI, 3, 23; XXVII, 1; XXVIII, 3; XXXI, 3; Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 477; Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LV, 6-8; LXXX; *Priest.* VI, 5.

445 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 153; tr. 473-474.

446 Stoop, *Alexander*, 30.

447 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXIX, 3; tr. 425; cf. *HR*, *Prol.* 5, X, 2; XII, 2; Macarius, *Homilies*, IV, 3; *Liber Graduum*, 909.

448 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 77; tr. 472.

449 Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Poly.* 1, 3; *Odes of Solomon*, 8, 2-3; 12, 6; *Didache*, 16, 1; *Acts of Thomas*, 60; 66; 122; 146; 153; 154; 158. *Didascalia*, IV, 53, 58-59; VII, 83; XII, 146; XIII, 152, 154; XV, 160-161; XXI, 214-215, 218; XXIII, 222.

450 'On Anthemius, see *Prosopography of the Later Empire* II, 93-95 which gives 383 as a possible date for his Persian mission. Festugière, *Antioche*, 268, proposes a date between 375 and 378', Price, *History*, 80.

demands to be granted this. My mind is torn over this: I will not consent to have two at the same time; I welcome my compatriot as a compatriot, but to expel my earlier companion when he has become dear to me is something I think both distressing and unjust.' Aphrahat rejected the gift, preferring to keep his old tunic.[451] The hermit's tunic was made of a rough material: *for some of goat's hair, for some of camel's hair, and there are some for whom skins suffice alone, and these long worn.*[452] *Some are clad in burlap, and others in woven straw.*[453] In shape, the tunic was, generally speaking, very similar to the Arab gallabiah (also worn by the Syrians), which covers the whole body.[454] It was regarded as the sackcloth of repentance and poverty.[455]

At the beginning of his eremitic life, Symeon the Stylite wore a cloth woven from straw: *His clothing was patched with straw from the wild grain of the second year, which grew before him in the enclosure, and upon it he coiled a hard rope.*[456] Subsequently, he wore a garment made of goats' leather,[457] and he later wore a tunic made from the hair of unnamed animals:[458] *The great James,*[459] *sent him* (Polychronius) *a goat's hair cloak which someone had brought him, but even this he sent back, considering it too effective a covering and too well made--for he always uses the clothes that are extremely simple and cheap.*[460] One may recall that Baradatus covered his *entire body with a tunic of skins--only round the nose and mouth has he left a small opening for breath, in order to receive and inhale the common air, since otherwise human nature cannot live.*[461] In the *Acts of Thomas*, Judas Thomas is said to *wear one garment*, and walk in bare feet.[462] The Syrian hermits also went barefoot: *Blood flows from their feet, because barefoot they walk all the day.*[463] Zeno, however, who came from a wealthy family and was brought up in some comfort, could not bear to walk barefoot so he wore a pair of old sandals: *He used to wear old rags and likewise shoes that needed a strap, since the pieces of leather had come apart.*[464]

451 *HR*, VIII, 4; tr. 73-74; cf. *HR*, XIV, 2; XXIV, 9.
452 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXVIII, 3; tr. 418.
453 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 221; tr. 475.
454 This kind of clothing is popular in the Syrian Orient even today.
455 On eremitic clothing as the garb of repentance and poverty, cf. Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LV, 6; LXVIII, 3; LXIX, 3; LXXII, 3; *Stat.* XVII, 5; *Priest.* VI, 6; *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Lamy) 25; *HR*, XXIX, 4.
456 *Syriac Life*, 538; tr. 131.
457 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 539, 628; cf. *HR*, XVIII, 1; XXVII.
458 Cf. *Antony Life*, 494 (5); *HR*, I, 2; V, 8; X, 2; XI, 3; XIV, 2; XVII, 9; XX, 3; XXX, 1.
459 *HR*, XXI.
460 *HR*, XXIV, 9; tr. 158.
461 *HR*, XXVII, 3; tr. 178.
462 *Acts of Thomas*, 20; 45; 96.
463 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 225; tr. 475; cf. *ibid.* 89; Chrysostom, *Tim.* XIV.

10. PRISON

In Theodoret's view a hermit's cell was a *voluntary prison*.[465] Accordingly, in the later Syrian tradition, the hermit came to be known as a prisoner, though this is not a feature of Syrian literature before the middle of the fifth century. Hitherto, 'imprisonment' signified the evil power that imprisoned Christians in darkness, corruption, and ignorance to destroy them. In early Syrian literature the word 'prison' was used as a name for the sinful world which captured the followers of Christ, torturing them in its corruption.[466] At the same time, the prison was a place of judgement where every sinner should be held while paying off his 'debts' purging himself of sin. One's own prison was thus constructed from sin and one could be delivered from it only through repentance and the ove of God.[467]

According to John the Solitary, the soul is imprisoned in the body for as long as it facilitates bodily action; once the body submits itself to the Spirit, however, the soul is liberated from its slavery. The body, therefore, remained the prison of the soul only while it opposed the action of the Spirit; if it could act in harmony with the Spirit, it would be resurrected and become a source of freedom and joy for the soul.[468] For John, the body belonged to the material world, the soul to the world of knowledge.[469] One may deduce that 'prison' signified the submission of the spiritual world to the material as a result of ignorance: human nature suffers when it is emprisoned in the material world because that world is inferior to the domain of the Spirit. Through His incarnation, Christ alone became the liberator of human nature; he redeemed human nature from slavery to a perfect unity with the Spirit. These ideas are also found in a passage by Rabbula regarding a certain kind of hermit-prisoner: *The monks shall not grow hair, and put on iron or hang (something) except only those who imprisoned themselves and do not go out of the place.*[470] In early Syrian asceticism, then, prison was the word used to describe the state of those Christians who were persecuted by the sinful world, waiting for their final salvation.[471] It was also used to express the stage of Sheol where repentant sinners wait for liberation from their sins.[472]

464 *HR*, XII, tr. 96.

465 Cf. *HR*, III, 5; IV, 4.

466 Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 1, 2; 3, 1; 21, 2; *Tral.* 1, 1; 10; *Smyr.* 5, 2; 6, 2; *Didascalia*, XIX-XX; VII, 89; *Acts of Thomas*, 64; 118; 121-122; 142; 146; 159-164.

467 Cf. *Didache*, 1, 5; *Didascalia*, IX, 112-113; XXVI, 252; *Acts of Thomas*, 108-113; 142; 146; 149-154; 160-169.

468 Cf. John the Solitary, I, 8-10.

469 Cf. John the Solitary, VI, 72; tr. 111.

470 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 28 (5).

471 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 598-600; *Abraham Qidunaya*, 22; *Acts of Thomas*, 153ff.

472 Ephrem, *On Paradise*, 5, 13; *Nisibene*, 36, 2.

11. HEALTH AND HYGIENE

One wonders about the health of the Syrian hermits, who spent a hard life of mortification in *dens, caves, and clefts of the earth.*[473] There can be no doubt that hermits suffered greatly from the deterioration in their health caused by years of mortification:

He (Symeon the Stylite) *stood for forty years upon the pillar which was about a cubit in width. And his feet were bound and fettered as though in the stocks, so that neither to right nor left was he able to shift one of them, until even the bones and sinews of his feet were visible, from suffering. Also, his belly burst open from standing. Also, his belly burst open from standing. And so h disciples used to say that the suffering of his belly was more severe than of feet. Three of the joints of his spine were dislocated from that const supplication with which he was bowing and lifting himself up straight aga before his Lord, until he had completed his discipline. Also he lost his eye-sight forty days together while he stood upon the pillar, from fasting and vigil beyond measure. But no one knew it except his disciples. For his eyes were open and he talked with everyone, but he could not see. And when our Lord willed, and he completed the forty days, suddenly his sight was restored....*[474] The health of James of Cyrrhestica was not much better than that of Symeon; many times, he was taken seriously ill as a result of his open-air asceticism. Theodoret, writing in 444: *Fourteen years ago a grave illness came upon him which caused him* (James) *a condition to be expected in one with a mortal body. It was the height of summer, and the heat of the sun's rays was kindled more intensely, with a lulling of the winds and the air remaining motionless. The disease was a flux of bile, moving downwards, hurting the guts, causing pressure and forcing one to run outside. It was then that I witnessed the great endurance of this man....*[475]

Most hermits suffered serious illness many times and it is quite probable that none of them lived a life completely free of sickness. Information is scarce on this subject because hermits were loathe to speak openly about their sufferings; equally, their solitary lives prevented observers from obtaining information about their daily lives on a regular basis: *Whenever the solitary falls ill, he has no companions who might visit him; and because he has commended himself to God, the power of the Most High visits him. And because there is no one there to prepare his food, or who might care for him in his illness, by the Holy Spirit he is refreshed, and receives both power and steadfastness.*[476] In spite of any

473 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 1.

474 *Syriac Life*, 576; tr. 154-155; cf. *ibid.* 629. Cf. *Antony Life*, Festugière, *Antioche*, 499 (17); 495 (8).

475 *HR*, XXI, 5; tr. 135; cf. *ibid.* XXI, 6-10, 13.

476 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 265-269; tr. 475; cf. Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXVIII, 3; LXXII, 4; *Tim.*

sickness or disease that might inflict his body a hermit would not readily submit to medical attention: *On another occasion, when walking at night, he* (Thalassius) *stepped with his heel on a sleeping viper, which caught the flat of his foot and inserted its teeth.... But not even on this occasion did he accept medical skill, but applied to his wounds the remedies only of faith--the sign of the cross, prayer, and invocation of God.*[477]

Symeon the Stylite cured himself in a similar manner: *Of a sudden he collapsed and fell headlong, and his head was wounded; but he took some of the dust of that place in which he was standing, made the sign of the cross upon it, and closed with it the wound, which immediately was healed so that he had no ort of injury.*[478] In this mentality, sickness was caused by Satan: harmony and perfection were the work of God, while all disharmony was the work of Satan.[479] Yet, if God allowed the Evil One to harm his people, it was because He wanted to make known the endurance of His disciples and to confirm them in their love for Him. Theodoret: *I am therefore of the opinion that the God of the universe allowed the beast to rage against his sacred body* (Thalasius' body) *in order to reveal undisguised the endurance of this godly soul. We see this same dispensation of His in the case of noble Job. He allowed him to be submerged by many and varied waves, through a wish to display to all the wisdom of the pilot. How else would we know the courage of the one and the endurance of the other, if the adversary of piety had not been given room to shoot all kinds of arrows against them?*[480]

The *memra* which attributed to Ephrem also adds: *There is no grief when they are ill, no sorrow when they are afflicted, for then sickness gives them strength, and affliction, increased experience.*[481] Yet, in a story intended to communicate some miracles of Alexander Akoimetoi, the biographer depicted Alexander as having a compassionate heart, ordering the healthy monks to take care of the sick ones: *I want to relate another sign surpassing human nature. The blessed one* (Alexander) *provided for the making of a mixed potion for the brothers who were sick. They had earthenware pots, and he had these fixed in place and water heated in them. He detailed four brothers who took it in turns each day to see to this. One day, however, an oversight occurred; or rather, the Lord permitted an oversight to occur in order that his servant might be made manifest to all. On that day no one had seen to it; they had simply washed out*

XIV; Theodoret, *HR*, II, 18; IV, 3; XII, 7; XVI, 4; XVII, 2; XVIII, 4; XX, 1; XXII, 4; XXIV, 4, 9; XXVI, 5, 7, 9, 22; XXVII, 3; XXIX, 2-4.

477 *HR*, XXII, 5; tr. 151.

478 *Syriac Life*, 520; tr. 119.

479 Cf. *Antony Life*, 499 (17); *Syriac Life*, 529; *HR*, XXVIII, 1; XXI, 23.

480 *HR*, XXII, 6; tr. 152; *ibid.* XXII, 4.

481 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 241; tr. 477.

the jars and filled them with cold water in the morning,and left them. When the time had come and they remembered because the water was needed for use, they were too ashamed even to look at one of the brothers, and did not dare go and tell the abbot. But one of them plucked up his courage and went to him and said, 'We have no wood, and we have not heated the water'. When the blessed one heard this, he said, 'Why did you not mention this in the morning? But I know that you want to test me. Go; you have your hot water'. Doubtful, they went in, and found the jars boiling. And on that day no fire had been put under them. A' this, the brothers marvelled once again at the faith of the man. We have sho these things in part so that from these few examples we may give assurance many, and [of the fact] that all things were possible for him because he w perfect in faith.[482] According to Chrysostom, the hermits had no concern fc hygiene and they *refrained from the bath.*[483] Dirtiness, therefore, became a sign of their mortifications: *And instead of unctions and salves, dirt lies upon their bodies; yea, their bodies are blackish for love of the Anointed One.*[484] The *Syriac life* says that Symeon *neither washed nor anointed himself.*[485] Some hermits, the open-air ascetics, for example, and perhaps the wandering monks, took frequent (and enforced) natural showers during the winter seasons; on these occasions they enjoyed water, though at other times it was not much used.

The Syrian hermit took no interest in bodily sickness or cleanliness. He was completely absorbed in curing his soul of the sickness of sin and cleansing his heart of the dirt which was ignorance and darkness.[486] Despite weak health, some hermits appear to have lived long lives: James the Persian died at the age of one hundred and four,[487] Peter the Galatian died at the age of ninety-nine,[488] Eusebius of Asikha lived for more than ninety years,[489] Maris lived for about ninety,[490] while James, the hermit of Nimousa, died when he was over ninety years of age,[491] and Heliodorus lived for sixty-five years. Many other hermits are said to have lived to be over ninety.[492] In this respect, one should note that Theodoret's information may not be entirely accurate; his repetition of the number ninety, to give but one example, may be purely symbolic.[493] Finally, the

482 Stoop, *Alexander*, 47.
483 Chrysostom, *Priest.* VI, 5.
484 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 85-89; tr. 472; on the dirtiness of the hermits cf. Theodoret, *HR*, VI, 1-2; XI, 5; Vööbus, *Ephrem*, 101.
485 *Syriac Life*, 618; tr. 182. Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 275-276.
486 Cf. *HR*, VIII, 1; X, 2; XII, 2.
487 Cf. *HR*, II, 6.
488 Cf. *HR*, IX, 1.
489 Cf. *HR*, XVIII, 4.
490 Cf. *HR*, XX, 3.
491 Cf. *HR*, XXV, 2.
492 Cf. *HR*, IV, 12; XXVI, 4.

Didascalia refers to the Bible when it states that those who mourn and repent do not wash themselves because the time of their mourning and repentance is not yet over.[494] If the deterioration of a hermit's health was a result of his mortification, therefore, his disregard for hygiene was a result of his life of repentance and mourning.

12. CONCLUSION

One could speak endlessly about mortification in early Syrian eremitism. It is a subject that encompasses all the main important practices of the eremitic life: *Serving God* (says Julian Saba) *is for me of more value than body and soul and existence and the whole of life, and I try to offer him, as far as I am able, a ministry pure of stain, and to please him in every way.*[495] The aim of serving God and remaining pure for Him guided the hermits, who mortified their bodies to purify themselves of sin.[496] The life of mortification was considered to be a form of Christian martyrdom through which a hermit might die for Christ and so inherit the kingdom of God.

D. INTELLECTUAL INSTRUCTION

The intellectual life of a Syrian hermit was based on the teachings of the fathers, especially the eremitic fathers, whose thinking had strong biblical foundations. The natural world--God's creation--was also considered a major source of knowledge by the hermits. In addition, according to Chrysostom, the use of books was widespread in the monasteries: *there are some (hermits) too that have learned to write out books.*[497]

1. THE FATHERS AND THEIR BOOKS

The esteem in which a disciple held his master's teaching was a principle of primary importance in the Syrian eremitic movement: *Select for yourself foremost diligence (or doctrine); give great honor to your fathers, to your masters, and to those who see you; your brothers will profit by you, and your companions will imitate the manner (of life) and your steadfastness.*[498] Further: *- (Above) good gold and precious tones and good gems and (emeralds) receive what is the heavenly learning; and especially--Above all your possessions--be diligent to obtain the truth. - Purify the mind of your boyhood, and approach the learning entirely (well), and you will be worthy of the instruction of your masters, and you will teach (others) in like manner as they.*[499] Since their first

493 Cf. *Gen.* 5, 9; 17, 17; *Ez.* 4, 5-9; 41, 12.
494 Cf. *Didascalia.* XXI, 216-217.
495 *HR*, II, 16; tr. 31.
496 Cf. *HR*, IV, 2; X, 2; VII, 1; XXVI, 12; XII, 2; XXXI, 7.
497 Chrysostom, *Tim.* XIV; tr. 457.
498 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 19 (3).

formation, the monasteries of the Syrian Orient have been centres of intellectual instruction and learning.[500] A rule from Rabbula presumes the availability of all kinds of books in the monasteries; *Books which are outside the faith of the Church shall not be in the monasteries.*[501] We do not know exactly which books the first Syrian hermits read but there is evidence to suggest that some hermits read books regularly: Zeno, for exampl, *would borrow one book from his friends, read it all and first return it before borrowing another one.*[502] One should not conclude from this that the hermit's intellectual instruction was based on books alone. Most early hermits seem to have had very little formal education. The hermit was interested only in the Bible and the teachings of the Fathers. Books used in the eremitic life, therefore, had to be concerned with the doctrines of the Church. It is not possible to be precise on this subject, for information is scarce. One can only reiterate that the hermits' primary interests were mortification, meditating on the Bible, and imitating the prophets and their Lord Jesus Christ.[503]

2. NATURE AND ANIMALS

The hermits regarded nature as a book of instruction through which they learnt the wisdom of God in His creation: *Here already they meditate upon the things of the kingdom, holding converse with groves, and mountains, and springs, and with great quietness, and solitude, and before all these, with God....*[504] *And, (they) see birds flying, and trees waving, and a breeze blowing, and streams rushing through glens....*[505] *and the moon instead of the light of the candle.*[506] Libanius, who attacked the Syrian hermits in his works, depicted the hermits of Mount Silpius as an anti-social people who dwelt in caves and led a life of the utmost severity.[507] Syrian eremitism was deeply affected by life in the mountains and deserts; it became an important feature of the vocation: *caverns are their palaces, and rocks are their sleeping rooms, heights are their balconies, and ledges their habitations; the herb of the mountains is as their dinner table.*[508] *They allowed their hair cover their bodies, their beards grew long, and their finger-nails became like the talons of birds of prey.*[509]

499 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 19 (4), 20 (7).
500 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 388-414.
501 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 29 (10).
502 *HR*, XII, 5; tr. 98.
503 Cf. Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXXIII, 4; LXIX, 4; *Priest.* VI, 2, 6; Festugière, *Antioche*, 209f; *Moines d'Orient* I, 75ff; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 235-253.
504 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXVIII, 3; tr. 417.
505 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXXII, 4; tr. 439.
506 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXIX, 3; tr. 425.
507 Libanius, *Oration* 2.
508 *Ms. Sharf. Patr.* 302, fol. 222a. I quote from Vööbus, *History of Ascticism* II, 97.
509 Cf. Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 200; Chrysostom, *Stat.* XVII, 6; Overbeck, *Opera Selecta*, 116;

Heliodorus spent a wild life with animals in nature, his hair grew long and formed a mantle for his body.[510] But Rabbula forbade the coenobitic hermits to grow their hair.[511] The hermits were accustomed to living in close harmony with animals. Animals even became a subject of meditation and learning. Malchus found in the ants an example of the coenobitic hermits who worked for the entire community and owned nothing individually.[512] The hermits defended animals, entreating people to respect their lives and refrain from killing them.[513] It is reported that, on occasion, animals befriended the hermits, obeying their commands and acting as their servants:[514] *While this was being said, there ppeared at a distance a lion. Those with the old man were filled with alarm; but vhen the man sitting on the den saw it, he* (Symeon the Elder) *stood up and gestured to the lion to go across to the other side. It immediately obeyed and came up carrying the bunch of dates. It then turned and went back again and at a distance from the men lay down and went to sleep.*[515] Hermits and animals appear to have coexisted peacefully in the desert, even mixing with each other as friends: *Behold, they mingle themselves with animals and take pleasure with birds; they mix themselves always with stags and are leaping with fawns.*[516] Finally, one may emphasise that the Syrian hermits of the deserts and mountains were called by their biographers, the *desert-dwellers*[517], the *mountain-dwellers*[518], and the *dwellers of the dens, of the caves, and of the clefts.*[519]

3. PHILOSOPHY

The Greek term *philosophia* was associated both with the hermits and with their way of life. Christian writers used the word as a challenge to Greek philosophy which they considered inferior to Christian belief. For the Christians of the Syrian Orient, the Syrian hermits replaced and surpassed the Greek

Theodoret states that Theodosius 'wore his hair unkempt and stretching down to his feet and even further, and for this reason had it tied around his waist', *HR*, X, 2; tr. 89; cf. *HR*, II,4; XI, 1,3.

510 *PO*, VIII/1, 74-75.

511 Cf. Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 28, 5.

512 Cf. Jerome, *Malchus*, 317, 7.

513 Cf. *Antony Life*, 498 (15); *HR*, VI, 2.

514 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 588; *Antony Life*, 498 (15); *HR*, VI, 2, 10.

515 *HR*, VI, 10; tr. 66. One may compare this story with that of the meeting between Symeon and some Jews who were lost in the desert. Symeon ordered two desert lions to guide the Jews back to their city; cf. *HR*, VI, 2. The lions' obedience recalls the Gospel of Thomas: 'Jesus said: Blessed is the lion which the man eats and the lion will become man; and cursed is the man whom the lion eats and the lion will become man', *Gospel of Thomas*, 7; tr. 5.

516 *Ms. Sharf. Patr.* 302, fol. 222b; the translation is from Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 27.

517 Cf. Ephrem, *On Solitaries*; 475.

518 Cf. Overbeck, *Opera Selecta*, 113.

519 Cf. Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 478.

philosophers.[520] According to Theodoret, the eremitic struggle against evil, embodied in the life of mortification, rendered them true *philosophers*, who overcame Satan and cleansed themselves of sin.[521] Theodoret defined philosophy as friendship with God. Those who despised everything for God's sake were truly worthy to be called the disciples of the true philosophy, friends of God: *Virtue, or philosophy, is an abiding good. It overcomes the hands of the robber, the tongue of the slanderer, and the showers of darts and spears of the enemy; it does not become the victim of fever, nor the plaything of a storm, nor the casualty of shipwreck. Time does not remove its power, but increases power. The substance of it is love for God. It is impossible for one who does become fervently enamoured of God to succeed in philosophy. But rather, this thing is itself called 'philosophy' (friendship with wisdom), since God is, and is called, Wisdom.... Therefore the true 'philosopher' (friend of wisdom) could appropriately be called the 'friend of God'. The 'friend of God' despises everything else and looks at the Beloved alone. He puts serving him before all the rest together; he says, performs, and thinks only those things that please and serve the One he loves, and abominates everything that he forbids.*[522]

The eremitic life was considered a *philosophy* because its ascetic practices led to the unity of man with God.[523]The Syrian Church frequently attacked Greek philosophers and philosophy. It regarded the teachings of Christ as the perfect culmination of all learning, after which one had no further need of inferior philosophies which could lead only to ignorance and corruption. Tatian bitterly attacked the Greek philosophers, accusing them of decadence and corruption: *What are your philosophers doing of any significance or note? They leave one shoulder bare and wear their hair long and grow beards, sporting the nails of wild beasts.*[524] *And they say they have no needs, but in fact like Proteus*

520 Cf. Chrysostom, *Stat.* XVIII, 3; XVII, 5-7; *Acts*, XIII; *Eph.* XXI; *Priest.* VI, 6. *HR*, *Prol.* 2-4; II, 3, 6, 9; III, 4, 12, 20; IV, 1, 2, 8, 10, 12, 13; VI, 1, 7, 13; VIII, 1; IX, 1, 9; X, 9; XI, 3; XII, 4, 5; XIII, 3; XIV, 5; XV, 4; XVI, 1, 3; XVII, 10; XVIII, 1; XX, 4; XXI, 2; XXI, 5, 11, 28, 32; XXII, 2; XXIV, 5; XXV, 2; XXVI, 2, 4, 23; XXVII, 4; XXVIII, 5; XXX, 2, 5, 7; XXXI, 1-3, 15.

521 Cf. *HR*, XXXI, 1ff.

522 *HR*, XXXI, 15; tr. 199-200.

523 Cf. *HR*, *Prol.* 4; cf. Canivet, *Histoire*, 80. Price, *History*, 10 says: 'The application of the word 'philosophy' to Christian asceticism, however unintellectual, occurs in several fourth century Fathers, e.g. Eusebius and John Chrysostom (see Lampe, *PGL*, 1483). There was preparation for this in the Platonic understanding of philosophy as a path to tame the passions (Porphyry, *To Marcella*, 31) and purify the mind so as to enable the intuition of higher truths (Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras*, 46). See Theodoret, *Cure of Hellenic Maladies*, XII, 19-37, where he argues that Plato's philosophical ideal of detachment from worldly affairs and assimilation to God has been more successfully realised by the monks than by the pagan philosophers. See also Canivet, 'Théodoret et le monachisme', 261-274.'

524 The Syrian hermits had long hair and grew beards.

they want a leather-dresser for the wallet, a weaver for the cloak, a wood-cutter for the stick, and for gluttony rich men and a chef. You, sir, behaving like a dog--you have no knowledge of God and have sunk to imitating irrational creatures! You make a great noise in public arguing your own case with plausibility....[525] The early Syrian Church considered its hermits the new *philosophers* of the new religion; as practised by the hermits, Christian asceticism replaced Greek philosophy and became the *philosophy* of the Church.

4. GREEK AND SYRIAC

Greek culture and language were not important in early Syrian eremitism. he culture of most hermits was Syriac and only a few, who happened to come from a Greek background, could speak Greek.[526] Greek was used extensively in the Roman administration of the Syrian Orient as the official language of government. In this capacity it became part of the culture of the Syrian intelligentsia, confined to the large cities, and the majority of ordinary Syrians spoke only Syriac.[527] Greek was used in a few eremitic communities, such as Zeugma,[528] the communities of Teleda,[529] and by the *Akoimetoi*.[530] Greek was spoken in these places because Greek speakers who joined the eremitic movement of the Syrian Church were not compelled to give up their language. Greek-speaking hermits lived quite independently of the Syriac-speakers, retaining their own culture. The fact that many Syrian hermits had Greek names does not necesarily mean that they were Greek-speakers, as it was the custom in Syria to use Greek names.[531]

525 Tatian, 25; tr. 47-48.

526 Cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 253.

527 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 241; Bardy, *Langues*, 2, 30; Hendriks, 'Monastères internationaux', 165ff.

528 Cf. *HR*, V, 5.

529 Cf. *HR*, IV, 13.

530 Cf. Stoop, *Alexander*, 27.

531 Cf. details in Canivet, *Monachisme syrien*, 238-246. A similar practice is widespread in modern Lebanon where Christians often use French names.

III. FULFILMENT OF THE EREMITIC VOCATION: THE HEAVENLY WORLD AND THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

A hermit healed from the sinful world through the life of seclusion is truly risen from the world of darkness. He enters the heavenly world, the world of life, and, as a result of his destitution and suffering, he receives again the new life of Christ which he first received at his baptism. At that moment he becomes one with God and his life shines in the world of life which is beyond suffering an death, the world which has no beginning and no end. In this way the herm finally becomes a true Christian and a perfect disciple of Christ.

1. DEATH AND LIFE

The *memra*, *On Solitaries*, summarizes the early eremitic understanding of death and describes how the hermit prepared to face this event. Death was seen as a feast of victory and joy, the moment when the hermit ended this temporary life of misery and started his eternal life: *They tremble not at death, for death is repose from labours. And because they were dead in their lives, there they will live in God.... And because the temporal death is a mercy for the righteous, death they therefore despise, since it is subjugated to them like a slave... And wheresoever his end occurs, there also is his grave. And like a seed in the furrow, he abides, kept for the day of resurrection. And if, perchance, in a cave by death he is overtaken, then that cave becomes his tomb, and it reverences the treasure of his relics. And if in the cleft of a rock his end does come, then there his relics will be preserved.... One in a grotto is overtaken by his last day, and therein takes place for him the wedding feast of joy, which endures until the resurrection. And another of them completes his life upon the ledge of a cliff, and there his bones are preserved like unto gleaming jewels. And another attains his last while standing in prayer and so he falls asleep, and with a sigh within his heart his soul takes wing to Heaven. Another's end arrives and overtakes him at the hour of his liturgy, and with his mouth filled with praises he deaprts to rest from his labours. Another is overtaken by his end whilst eating, and he falls asleep, and from that table of herbs he is invited to partake of the table of life. And another's end arrives and overtakes him whilst he leans upon a support, and there his lifelss body remains until the resurrection. And again another completes his life somewhere journeying along a byway, and there he finds his rest and deliverance from the suffering of afflictions.... There is no man to close their eyes and give burial to their bodies. One sleeps the sleep of (eternal) rest, inclining his head upon a stone. Another lays his head between his knees and to that land his sould departs. No weeping can be heard in their environs, no lament upon their place. The hymns of angels of the Most High*

surround them from every side. And at their death there is no sorrow, and no mourning at their departure, for their death is a great victory whereby they have discomfited the foe...'[1]

For the Christian, death is both an emigration from this temporary world to the eternal world[2] and a period of sleep in the Lord until the resurrection.[3] True death, moreover, is the death of sin. The hermit wishes to achieve such a death, and so to overcome the realm of Sheol through his life of mortification.[4] After a true death, the eternal life which is Jesus Christ will abide in the hermit forever.[5] Accordingly, in Chrysostom we read that, for the hermits, death became a great feast of joy. A hermit's funeral was a procession filled with life, cheerfulness, and thanksgiving; it was an occasion for optimism rather than sorrow: *Deaths happen there indeed, for their bodies are not immortal, but they know not death, as death. The departed are accompanied to the grave with hymns. This they call a procession, not a burial; and when it is reported to that anyone is dead, great is their cheerfulness, great their pleasure, or rather not one of them can bear to say that one is dead, but that he is perfected. Then there is thanksgiving and great glory, and joy, everyone praying that such may be his own end, that so his own combat may terminate, and he may rest from his labor and struggle, and may see Christ.*[6]

Death for Alexander Akoimetos was a real rest from his hard ascetic labour and a liberator from all cares and worries: *This blessed man* (Alexander) *lived the ascetic life for fifty years and was constantly afflicted, persecuted, naked, thirsty and hungry, and rejoiced in this, boldly teaching the word of truth and gathering many people to offer to Christ, as his disciples also do to this day. As he shone forth in these ways, his end came bringing him rest from his labours, blessed and free from care. He fell asleep in holiness and was buried in the region of Bithynia, in a place called Gomon.*[7] The funeral of a Syrian hermit was an social important event, involving a procession to the local church. The local congregation looked upon their hermits as a heavenly treasure, as a source of blessing and grace.[8] Thus, in Rabbula's rules for the monks, the funeral of a hermit is described as a significant event both for the monastery and its

1 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 240-360; tr. 475-476.
2 Cf. *HR*. I, 14; II, 22; IV, 8, 9, 12; V, 6, 8, 9; VI, 14; IX, 13, 16; X, 8; XI, 5; XII, 7.
3 Cf. Jerome, *Malchus* , 318(10); *Syriac Life*, 620ff.
4 Cf. Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 472ff; *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Lamy) 18-19; 24; Ephrem, *Nisibene Hymns*, XIV; *HR*, XXXI, 7-8; *Syriac Life*, 619-622; Nagel, *Askese*, 20-34.
5 Cf. John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 461-462; Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 472, 475; Ephrem, *Nisibene Hymns*, XIV; Chrysostom, *Matt.* LXXII, 4.
6 Chrysostom, *Tim.* XIV; tr. 457.
7 Stoop, *Alexander*, 52.
8 Cf. *HR*, III, 18; XIII, 19; XV, 5; XVL, 4; XVII, 10; XXI, 30, 35; XXIV, 2; *Syriac Life*, 626-643; *Antony Life*, 505(30)-506.

neighbourhood: *When a brother or a rišdaira of one of the monastèries departs from this world, alone those brothers of this monastery shall bury him in quietness; and if they are not sufficient (for this), they shall call brothers from the monastery that is near to them (to be) with them, and shall not gather (the people) from the villages and lay people for the procession.*[9]

2. HEAVEN AND ANGELS

The desire for the heavenly life and the aspiration to a likeness with the angels were the twin aims of the eremitic vocation. It is therefore essential to define the significance of these terms for the early Syrian hermits; only then c one begin to consider the hermits' success in achieving their aims. Heaven, th is the world of God whose Word dwells in His believers. One may refer to event in the life of Symeon: *He entered the church, and heard as the epistle w read. And he asked those who stood with him: 'These Scriptures, what are they. and what is in them?' They said to him, 'These are the Scriptures of God, dwells in heaven, and the word of God is in them.'*[10] The heavenly world provides the opposite pole to the sinful world; it is depicted as a place of peace, love, knowledge, perfection, and light. According to some sources, one could only be reunited with this world through the life of mortification.[11]

The hermit, who has renounced all worldly things for God's sake, should become worthy of the heavenly world: *To the covetous they leave their riches, because their treasure is in Heaven.... And because they have loved no possession, they climb up bodily into Heaven. However, the covetous lay fettered to the earth, but the poor by choice took wing to Heaven's heights.*[12] On account of this need for renunciation, heaven is regarded as the place inhabited by the poor in Spirit. It is identified as the terrestrial Paradise, as Eden, and so as the Kingdom of God.[13] The hermit's aim was to transport himself, physically as well as spiritually, to the glory of Eden, and then, along with the angels of heaven, the apostles, the prophets and the saints of God, to reside in the heavenly world.[14] Hermits were regarded as citizens of heaven and strangers to the world;[15] their *tents*, it was said, are *pitched in heaven.*[16] They were considered the equals of the angels, because, like them, they were thought to reside in heaven.[17] The hermits came to be looked upon as earthly angels, protected and

9 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 32(24).
10 *Syriac Life*, 509; tr. 112.
11 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 509-514, 580, 617-618; Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 189.
12 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 10-29; tr. 471.
13 Cf. Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 33, 61, 113, 161, 190, 389ff.
14 Cf. Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 190; Chrysostom, *Matt.* LXVIII, 3ff.
15 Cf. Chrysostom, *Mat.* LV, 8; LXIX, 4; *Tim.* IV.
16 Cf. Chrysostom, *Matt.* LXIX, 3.
17 Cf. Chrysostom, *Stat.* XVII, 3; *Matt.* LXIX, 4.

assisted by the angels of heaven.[18] Their way of life was regarded as a continual song of praise to God: *They are become companions of celestial angels, and they emulate them in every deed. The angels in Heaven have no possessions,, and do naught but sing God's praise.*[19] According to the *Liber Graduum*, the hermits are like the angels in heaven because throughout their lives they seek to make manifest the life of resurrected souls. They neither marry nor take any interest in earthly things.[20] For Theodoret hermits are like angels because they remain free from all worldly cares; their passions are completely mortified for God's sake:

Intercourse with females is superfluous for the angels: as immortal they have no need of increase, and as bodiless they are incapable of sexual activity. Another reason for calling them (the hermits) *holy is that there is nothing of the earth about them: instead, separated from all earthly passions, they labor as a heavenly choir, singing hymns to their maker. They also serve by ministering to the divine will, in accordance with its commands, sent out as they are by the God of all creation to further the salvation of men.... It is in imitation of their mode of life that so many men have embraced the service of God, shunning even licit intercourse as a distraction from the things of God, and forsaking their homes and families: this they do in order to be anxious only about the affairs of the Lord and to escape all bonds that might prevent the mind from soaring into heaven and gazing in desire at the invisible and ineffable beauty of God. They fill the cities and the villages, the hilltops and the ravines. Some of them by living in community fashion in their souls the images of wisdom; others living in twos or threes, or in solitary isolation, protect their eyes from the lure of visible beauty, and win for their souls the freedom to bask in the contemplation of things spiritual. If men yoked to the body and troubled by passions many and various embrace on exalted style of life which has nothing to do with the body and belongs to heavenly beings, what words would then suffice to depict the life of incorporeal natures, a life free from every passion and anxiety?*[21]

The eremitic life transforms the hermit from a dweller in this temporal and sinful world into an inhabitant of the heavenly world which is pure and eternal. Heaven is the Kingdom of God, and is, in a sense, identical with the inner state of those who lead a godly life. The angels, therefore, as the spiritual inhabitants of God's Kingdom, may be identified with those who achieve such spiritual purity on earth. John the Solitary defines angels as beings whose total integrity represents the unification of the physical and the spiritual worlds. Such beings are no longer mortal because, through their integrity, they are already

18 Cf. Ephrem, *On Solidaries*, 130f, 160ff, 330f, 350ff; Zingerle, *Monumenta Syriaca*, I. 127-128.

19 Ephrem, *On Solidaries*, 453; tr. 479.

20 Cf. references and explanation in the next section about the *ihidaya*.

21 *The Cure of the Hellenic Maladies*, III, 91-92; tr. from Price, *History*, XXX-XXXI.

resurrected. These angels are beings of unity who dwell forever in the world of resurrection.[22] Accordingly, the eremitic life was called an *angelic life* because it aimed to fulfil in itself the heavenly life which is described in the Scriptures.[23] The eremitic life was a Christian vocation which aimed to restore the sinful to a prelapsarian state. Eremitic spirituality, moreover, was identical with the spirituality of the whole early Syrian church, and was, therefore, prescribed to anyone who wished to follow Christ. In this way the foregoing analysis has a very general application: the return to the heavenly world is one with a gene restoration of the image of God in man.[24]

3. IḤIDAYA: THE SINGLE ONE

Iḥidaya is a complex term in Syrian literature. Its primary meaning is not monk, or a hermit, or a solitary'; it refers rather to the unity of man with God. To discover the origins of the word one must trace its lineage back to Aramaic sources.[25] In the Syriac Old Testament *iḥidaya* was used as a title for Adam, *the iḥidaya, who had been created in the world.* In Jewish Aramaic literature it was applied to the Patriarchs as well as to Adam.[26] Subsequently, it was applied to Christ as the *Iḥidaya* of the Father.[27] In view of its Aramaic origin and its use in the early Syrian tradition as a name for Christ, the world *iḥidaya* must be translated and understood in the context of its spiritual and cultural background. As one of the names of Christ, *Iḥidaya* means 'the Only-Begotten, the Only One' and the word was subsequently applied to the hermit because, through his eremitic life, the latter aimed to become a perfect disciple of Jesus Christ, the

22 Cf. John the Solitary, I, 245-249.

23 Cf. *HR*, IV, 3, 10; VIII, 1; X, 1; XXVIII, 4.

24 Cf. John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 463-464; Theodoret. *HR*, IX, 6.

25 Guillaumont, *Aux origines*, 33-36, explains the relations between 'Yahid' in Hebrew and 'ihidaya', and confirms that the two words derived from the same Semitic root and are synonymous. Guilllamont shows that the eremitic use of 'monachos' and 'ihidaya' was very similar in early Eastern eremitism, though the two words came originally from two different roots and cultures. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 107 believes that the original use of 'ihidaya does not go back to Hellenistic but to Palestinian Aramaean Christianity'. And Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 114 adds that the word 'Yahid' in Hebrew was rendered by 'ihidaya' in the Peshitta.

26 'In the wisdom of Solomon 10, 1 the term 'ihidaya' refers to Adam: 'It was wisdom which preserved the ancestral father, the *ihidaya*, who had been created in the world.' The term has an important background in the Jewish Aramaic Targumin where, not only are the Patriarchs sometimes described as ihidaye, but so too is Adam, in the Palestinian Targum at Genesis 3, 22. Here the Hebrew (along with the Septuagint and Peshita) has: 'Behold, Adam has become like one of us, knowing good and evil', but the Palestinian Targum gives something quite different: 'Behold the first Adam whom I created is single *(ihiday)* in the world, just as I am single *(ihiday)* in the heights of heaven...', Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, 112.

27 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 6-7; *Didascalia, Prooem*, 9; John the Solitary, V, 198; IX, 49, 76, 102, 319. Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 112 says: 'In the Syriac New Testament *Ihidaya* is above all a title of Christ, translating Greek Monogenes, Only-Begotten.'

Iḥidaya of the Father.[28] In the *Liber Graduum*, homily 25, the *iḥidaye* are like the angels in heaven because they seek the life of the resurrection.[29] Along with Aphrahat, the *Liber Graduum* confirms that, throughout their ascetic lives the *iḥidaye* bear witness to the truth of the resurrection. The *Liber Graduum* also confirms that the term encompasses celibacy. The *iḥidaye* do not marry, but are like the angels in heaven.[30] According to the *Liber Graduum* the *iḥidaye* is an ascetic because he is required *to bear the yoke of the Lord in his youth and to sit alone and keep silence with his mouth in the dust.*[31] The *iḥidaya* is also required to fast; he should not eat meat or drink wine,[32] but should content himself with dry bread and water.[33] As in Aphrahat,[34] in the *Liber Graduum* the life of the *iḥidaya* is called *iḥidayutha* and *iḥidayutha* is regarded as one of the ascetic ways of subjugating the body for the Lord's sake.[35] As explained in homily 30 of the *Liber Graduum*, the main aim of the *iḥidaya* is to work in the cause of faith and love.[36] We can conclude by saying that, in the *Liber Graduum*, the term *iḥidaya* refers to a Christian ascetic who does not marry because he wishes to be like the angels in heaven.

In Ephrem's *memre* on Jacob of Nisibis the *iḥidaya* is concerned with holiness and purity. Jacob of Nisibis became an *iḥidaya* to remain holy and chaste: *In two abodes was he an iḥidaya*[37] *from his early days; for he was holy (qaddisha) within his body, and ihidaya in his dwelling - openly and secretly was he chaste (nakpa).*[38] In this context the term *iḥidaya* clearly includes celibacy. Abraham was an *iḥidaya* because he remained celibate *(qaddisha).* The *memra* confirms the connection between *iḥidaya* and unmarried life. It states that chastity *(nakputha)* serves as a guarantee of the hermit's life as an *iḥidaya.* The common thread in *iḥidaya* and *qaddisha* is continence, or the absence of any marital commitment in the ascetic's life; the ascetic needs to be *nakpa* in order to

28 Adam, *Grundbegriffe,* 218-219 is in accord with this analysis. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 106-108, however, rejects the application of the word to Adam; he argues that, in Syrian eremitism, the term was used in connection with celibacy and the solitary life. In my opinion Vööbus' position cannot be substantiated because the life of the early Syrian hermits was first and foremost an imitation of Christ. Furthermore, the Syrian hermits did not separate themselves from the spirituality of their Syrian church, but drew on its theology and its vocabulary.

29 *Liber Graduum*, 749,16-452; cf. also *Lk.* 20,34-38 and *Mt.* 6, 25.

30 *Liber Graduum*, 749,16-452.

31 *Liber Graduum*, 208, 13-16; cf. also *Lam.* 3,27-28.

32 *Liber Graduum*, 257,19-24; cf. also *Rom.* 14,21.

33 *Liber Graduum*, 849, 20-23.

34 Cf. in this work, pp. 71-73.

35 *Liber Graduum*, 845, 7-10.

36 *Liber Graduum*, 860-932.

37 I have changed the translation from 'solitary' to 'ihidaya'.

38 Ephrem, *Nisibene Hymns,* XV, 9; tr. 184.

remain loyal to his goal as an *iḥidaya*. John the Solitary explains that the risen person becomes an *iḥidaya* because he has attained unity with God. Such a state is the state of the resurrected, hence the *iḥidaye* become like angels in heaven.[39] It is clear that the term *iḥidaya* denotes a life of consecrated celibacy, though the two term are not synonymous. Before the fourth century, however, the term was not used in the Syrian Church as a title for a celibate ascetic.[40] Such a person was simply a hermit of his Syrian church. *Monachos*[41] was later translated into Syriac by *iḥidaya*, but the term *iḥidaya* does not have a Greek origin. Its original use in the Syrian church was independent of the Greek term.[42]

In the *Gospel of Thomas*, the term *monachos* is used very much in the same sense as *iḥidaya* in the 4th century Syrian texts.[43] On the other hand, a translation of *iḥidaya* by 'solitary, hermit, anchorite' belongs to a later development of Syrian eremitism, and does not accurately reveal the meaning of *iḥidaya* in early Syrian eremitism.[44] As an imitator of Jesus Christ, the ultimate archetype of the *Iḥidaya*, the Syrian hermit was not interested in the question of marriage or celibacy for its own sake. His primary concern was to achieve a perfect purity and unity with God. The *iḥidaya* may thus be called 'the single one' and *iḥidayutha* 'the life of singleness' because the basis of the concept was the unity of man with God. Yet the spiritual basis of the *iḥidaya* and *iḥidayutha* cannot be separated from the spirituality inherent in Christianity in general. The spirituality of the Syrian hermits had its roots in the spirituality of their Christian community. This fact is emphasised by St Ephrem, who used the term *iḥidaya* in a baptismal context:

39 John the Solitary, I, 240-249; tr. 55.

40 The 'ihidaya' in the later monastic tradition became different from the 'ihidaya' of the early tradition, for the word was applied to the non coenobitic hermits: 'In later monastic terminology ihidaya means a 'solitary', someone who leads an eremitical, or semi-eremitical, life (attached nonetheless to a community, though not living in it). It stands in contrast to the term *dayraya*, a monk living in a monastery.', Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 112.

41 in Theodoret's *Historia Religiosa* the Syrian hermits were somtiems called in Greek 'monachos', cf. *HR*, IX, 9; XVII, 2, 11.

42 Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 114: 'In Eusebius' earlier work, the *Ecclesiastic l History*, he has a passage on the Jewish Therapeutai, whom the Fathers regularly as an antecedent for monasticism. Eusebius in this passage only uses the term *monasterion*, not yet *monachos*, but the early Syriac translation, which may well already have been known to Ephrem, makes considerable use of the term *iḥidaye* in rendering this passage on the Therapeutai. Cf. Eusebius, *HE*, II,17.

43 Kasser, *L'Evangile selon Thomas*, 41. 110. 182. The Gospel of Thomas, found in Nag Hammadi in 1945 in Coptic, was most probably written in Syria during the second half of the 2nd century. It is of secondary importance to this work, for there is no evidence that it was used by the Syrian hermits.

44 For more details see Adam, 'Grundbegriffe des Mönchtums', 209ff; Morard, 'Encore quelques reflexions sur Monachos', 395ff; 'Monachos, moine', 332ff; Judge, 'The earlier use of monachos', 72ff.

See, people being baptized,
becoming virgins and qaddishe,
having gone down to the font,
been baptized and put on
the single ihidaya.[45]

Sometime earlier, Aphrahat had spoken of *the Ihidaya from the bosom of the Father who gives joy to all the ihidaye.*[46] The passage continues as follows, introducing the bridal imagery also favoured by Ephrem: *There will be neither male nor female, servant or free*[47] *but all are children of the Most High, all are pure virgins betrothed to Christ, their lamps shining out there as they enter the bridal chamber together with the Bridegroom.*[48] After the third century the word *ihidaya* is used to indicate a Christian who seeks a life of unity with Christ through ascetic practices; in particular, silence and the subjugation of the body. Such unity necessitated a life of celibacy--for example, in order to become an *ihidaya* an ascetic who was married would have to leave his partner. With these meanings the word was applied to the early Syrian ascetics.[49] One must also emphasize that the title *ihidaya* had been applied to Christ Himself and consequently its application to the Christian hermit is of great importance. The term *ihidaya* acknowledged Christ's own presence in the person on whom it was conferred. Similarly, in view of the *ihidaya*'s duty to maintain his celibacy, one must acknowledge the deep involvement of this term with the Syrian Church's concept of consecrated celibacy and one must bear in mind that the term *ihidaya* encompasses the idea of an ascetic's devoted celibacy to Christ. For a translation of this word, one must look to one of the most essential features of the eremitic calling. Given the inescapably solitary nature of that vocation, it may be argued that the translation of *ihidaya* which remains most faithful to the word's meaning in early Syrian eremitism is 'the sinlge one'. That is how *ihidaya* will be rendered in the present work.

4. VIRGINITY AND PURITY

Virginity is a concept of the utmost importance and complexity in the history of the early church. It does not simply mean celibacy or an unmarried state.

45 Ephrem, *Ephiphany*, 8, 16.
46 *Demonstration*, 6, 6.
47 *Gal.* 3, 28.
48 These two quotations are taken from Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 114-115, who adds: 'We can begin to see that this key term of the Syrian protomonastic tradition is extremely rich in its various connotations. The *ihidaya* is a follower and imitator of the Christ the *Ihidaya* par excellence; he is single minded for Christ; his heart is single and not divided; he is single in the sense of celibate.'
49 Cf. in this work pp. 71-73.

Virginity was often evoked in early Syrian eremitic literature. In the lamentation of Mary, the virginity of Mary has nothing to do with marriage; but it is a question of maintaining complete purity for Christ. This can only be soiled by adultery and not by marriage:[50]

Great blessing would have been mine
had I died while still a virgin,
when the seal of virginity was preserved still sealed.
Fie on you, Evil One; what is it you have wrought in me?[51]

In the *memre* on Julian Saba, virginity is entirely a question of chastity: *The glorious, holy and virgin old man kept chastity, so that (his) virginity is without any stain.*[52] In the *Liber Graduum* as in the *memre* on the *ihidaye*, it is not only the hermits who are required to retain their virginity; the same applies to anyone who wants to follow Jesus. The preservation of virginity represents the combat of sin by a bodily purity and holiness: *All men keep their bodies in virginity, and renounce all the bad thoughts of sin, and make their hearts holy, and they imitate our Lord...*[53] The *Liber Graduum* associates virginity with the state of Adam and Eve before their Fall. Keeping one's virginity indicated a life of perfection. With the original sin, Adam and Eve did not only lose their virginity. They lost their perfection and spoiled the perfection of the world. The righteousness and virginity of the just was an attempt to restore what was destroyed at the Fall.[54] Although the *virgins* in the *Liber Graduum* rejected marriage, they did not reject marriage in general. They rejected only that sinful marriage which resulted from the Fall of Adam and which stands against God's will in his creation.[55] The *Liber Graduum* regards a holy marriage as far more important than virginity: *And if marriage becomes more holy and more humble than the virginity of body, it becomes greater than it.*[56] Virginity in the *Liber Graduum* is directly related to the state of Adam and Eve before the Fall, and is mainly concerned with the purity of the body. The virginity of the hermits was understood as a rejection of the sinful world in which the purity of God's

50 As we know, Mary was raped and lost her virginity, which she was preserving for Christ. In the *Syriac life* of Symeon the Stylite there is a story about a beautiful girl who refused to sleep with an evil man because she considered herself the servant of Christ, *Syriac Life*, tr. 175. This kind of story has deep resonance in the *Acts of Thomas* (cf. in this work pp. 17-23), where it shows that the early Christians would not consent to marriage with sinful people, and that they considered every sexual act outside Christ's will as an act of adultery.

51 Brock & Harvey, *Holy Women*, 38.

52 *Julian Saba*, III, 2.

53 *Liber Graduum*, 920, 16-20.

54 Cf. *Liber Graduum*, 761, 10-18; 367, 26-368, 27ff.

55 Cf. *Liber Graduum*, 367, 26ff.

56 *Liber Graduum*, 384, 2-20.

creation is destroyed. This understanding of virginity is characteristic of the early Syrian church which considered virginity as an imitation of the state of Adam and Eve before the Fall: it was regarded as a state of perfect purity in God.[57] At the end of his life Malchus the hermit preferred martyrdom to marriage and the loss of his virginity. His marriage was imposed on him by non-Christians. Moreover, the Arabs who captured Malchus forced him to marry a woman who was already married; Malchus' response to his ordeal was a model of Christian sentiment. He speaks to Jerome, after his liberation: *I was a Christian and so it was not lawful for me to take a woman to wife so long as her husband is alive (her husband had been captured with us, but carried off by another master), my owner was relentless in his rage, drew his sword and began to make at me. If I had not without delay stretched out my hand and taken possession of the woman, he would have slain me on the spot...*[58]

After this shock, Malchus was in anguish and started to lament his situation. He believed that his sins had led him to this misery; given the choice between sinful marriage and virginity, however, he preferred to kill himself to preserve his virginity for Christ: '*What are we to do, my soul, are we to perish or conquer? Are we to wait for the hand of the Lord, or pierce ourselves with our own sword? Turn your weapon against yourself; I must fear your death, my soul, more than the death of the body. Chastity preserved has its own martyrdom. Let the witness for Christ be unburied in the desert; I will be at once the persecutor and the martyr.' Thus speaking I drew my sword which glittered even in the dark, and turning its point towards me said: 'Farewell, unhappy woman: receive me as a martyr not as a husband.' She threw herself at my feet and exclaimed: 'I pray you by Jesus Christ, and adjure you by this hour of trial, do not shed your blood and bring its guilt upon me. If you choose to die first turn your sword against me. Let us be united upon these terms. Supposing my husband should return to me, I would preserve the chastity which I have learnt in captivity; I would even die rather than lose it. Why should you die to prevent a union with me? I would die if you desired it. Take me then as the partner of your chastity; and love me more in this union of the spirit than you could in that of the body only. Let our master believe that you are my husband. Christ knows you are my brother. We shall easily convince them we are married when they see us so loving.' I confess, I was astonished and, much as I had before admired the virtue of the woman, I now loved her as a wife still more. Yet I never gazed upon her naked person; I never touched her flesh, for I was afraid of losing in peace what I had preserved in the conflict. In this strange wedlock many days passed away. Marriage had made us more pleasing to our masters, and there was no*

57 Cf. in this work pp. 46-50; 67-86.

58 Jerome, *Malchus*, 316, 6.

suspicion of our flight; sometimes I was absent for even a whole month like a trusty shepherd traversing the wilderness.[59] Malchus rejected marriage because it was a sinful marriage that would have destroyed his Christian purity. In addition the demands of his eremitic life were that he should preserve his virginity and remain celibate. When Malchus finally escaped from captivity with his 'wife' each of them joined a monastery and remained there until death. As Malchus relates: *I betook myself therefore to this place* (his former monastery) *and returned to the monastic life, while I entrusted my companion here to care of the virgins; for though I loved her as a sister, I did not commit myself her as if she were my sister.*[60] Jerome's main interest in writing the life of Malchus was the story of his captivity. Jerome's purpose was to teach the hermits a lesson about the resiliance of chastity to evil. Jerome speaks in his own person: *Malchus was an old man, I a youth, when he told me these things. I who have related them to you am now old, and I have set them forth as a history of chastity for the chaste. Virgins, I exhort you, guard your chastity. Tell the story to them that come after, that they may realise that in the midst of swords, and wild beasts of the desert, virtue is never a captive, and that he who is devoted to the service of Christ may die, but cannot be conquered.*[61]

It is clear that the hermits' preservation of their virginity was interpreted as a struggle between purity and the sinful world, personified in evil people. As is witnessed by the tale of Malchus, virginity is not a denial of marriage because the latter is in accord with God's will. Rather, it stands in opposition to any sinful marriage arranged by man's sin and corruption. Chrysostom says that the hermits kept their virginity, did not marry, remained free from the ties of a human family. In his view, the kind of marriage which was rejected by the hermits was the sort indulged in by worldly pleasure-seekers.[62] For Chrysostom, a hermit who abandons his eremitic virginity to marry according to the Law of God commits adultery. This is because by marrying the hermit betrays his marriage with Christ, a commitment symbolised by his virginity.[63] Chrysostom's teaching appears to be unique in the early Syrian church. No other evidence exists that a hermit who married according to the Lord's will, he was regarded as adulterous.[64] On the contrary, virginity and holy marriage were in harmony in the early Syrian church. Another virtue related to virginity is chastity. This virtue governed the mind as well as the body.[65] The chastity of

59 Jerome, *Malchus*, 317, 6.
60 Jerome, *Malchus*, 318, 10.
61 Jerome, *Malchus*, 318, 10.
62 Cf. Chrysostom, *Matt.* XXI, 5; LV, 8; LXVIII, 4-5; LXIX, 3; LXX: *Tim.* XIV.
63 Cf. Chrysostom, *Theod.* 38, 10.
64 Cf. in this work pp. 34-50, 74-86.
65 Cf. Ephrem, *Nisibene Hymns*, 183-184; *Liber Graduum*, 865; 909; *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Beck), II, 4 ff; IV, 6; V, 13; VII, 6; X, 13; XI, 15; XIII, 9; *Julian Saba*, I, 10; III, 8; IV, 2;

hermits was likened to that of virgin women; the hermits were 'espoused' to Christ, their only Bridegroom: *they transferred all their love to the Bridegroom, like modest women who are eager to be loved and praised by their spouses but despise adulation from others.*[66] Theophilus of Antioch considers chastity as the complete rejection of adultery, fornication, prurient thoughts: *Concerning chastity the holy word teaches us not to sin either in deed or even in thought, not to imagine any evil in our heart or to covet a person's wife when we see her with our eyes. Solomon, who was a King and a prophet, said, 'Let your eyes look straight and let your eyelids incline justly (cf. 2,35); make straight paths for your feet' (Prov., 4,25).*[67] The *Didascalia* taught married Christians to act chastely even in their married lives, to avoid behaving like sinful people who fail to respect the holiness of marriage. Yet, chastity does not require the utter rejection of sexuality; sexual intercourse within a Christian marriage is seen as holy and chaste. Sexuality which is indulged outside a Christian marriage, by contrast, breaks the seal of chastity and, where the sinner is married, destroys the purity of marriage.[68] Finally, purity (*dakyutha*), both in eremitic spirituality as in the early Syrian church as a whole, was seen as the true purpose of the Christian life. A Christian should remain perfectly like his master Jesus Christ. The concept of purity implies a complete freedom from the sinful world; it is the state of those who are living in the Kingdom of God.[69]

It is important now to define the relationship in the early Syrian church between virginity and chastity on the one hand, and celibacy and marriage on the other. As a preface to this discussion, one must make a more general survey of the dispute over celibacy and marriage in the Christian church, especially the celibacy of the clergy. Documents on celibacy and marriage from before the fourth century are very scarce. Those which do survive show that consecrated celibacy was never imposed on any category of Christian society; it was rather a free, personal choice on the part of some Christians.[70] From the beginning of the

VI, 4; XI, 18; XVII, 9; XVIII, 3; XIX, 12; XX, 8; XXIII, 4; Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 20 (9); *Syriac Life*, 574; Jerome, *Malchus*, 318 (10).

66 *HR* XV, 6; tr. 116.

67 Theophilus of Antioch, III, 13; tr. 117-119.

68 Cf. *Didascalia*, III; IV, 54; XIV, 156; XV, 163-164; XVI, 173; XXIII, 222-224.

69 Cf. *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Beck), II, a4; IV, 6; V, 13; VII, 6; X, 13; XIII, 9; *Julian Saba*, I, 10; III, 8; IV, 2; XI, 18; XVII, 9; XVIII, 3; XIX, 12; XX, 8; XXIII, 4; John the Solitary, II, 93; VII, 81; X, 314; XI, 147; Chrysostom, *Priest.* VI, 7; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 10, 3; *Tral.* 7, 2; *Poly.* 2, 2; *Didache*, 14; Theophilus of Antioch, I, 2; II, 26; III, 13; *Didascalia*, XXVI, 257-263.

70 Cf. Vernet, 'Célibat ecclésiastique', 386. Bingham, *The Antiquities of the Christian Church*, 149f. says that during the first three centuries, no vow of celibacy was required of a man as a condition of ordination; on the contrary, the majority of bishops, presbyters, and deacons were married. Nor was there any ecclesiastical rule or tradition which regulated sexuality for the married clergy; each was left in freedom with his wife.

fourth century the conflict between celibacy and marriage started to become an important problem in the eyes of the ecumenical councils. At this time the question was only directly concerned with the clergy. The monastic movement was not yet of any major importance in the Church. In spite of some bishops who considered celibacy superior to marriage, especially for the clergy, church councils and synods rejected any imposition of celibacy. They confirmed the holiness and chastity of Christian marriage and, within marriage, of sexual intercourse.

The most ancient ecclesiastical dictum on clerical celibacy came from t council of Eliberis (Elvira) in Spain (ca. 300). It ordered married clergy to s having sexual intercourse with their wives, (Canon 33). The canon of Elibe was ineffective, for many other councils and prescriptions of the early church issued contrary laws. The council of Neocaesarea in Cappadocia (314-325) forbade priests to be married after their ordination, (Canon 1). A priest was allowed to marry before his ordination, but if his wife was an adulteress he would not be accepted into the priesthood, (Canon 8). Thanks to the intervention of Paphnutius, the Council of Nicea pronounced the married life of the clergy, including sexual intercourse, to be holy and chaste.[71] The Council of Gangra, held in Asia Minor in about the middle of the fourth century, formulated the following law relating to married clergy: *If anyone maintains that, when a married priest offers the sacrifice, no one should take part in the service, let him be excommunicated*; (Canon 4).[72] In 358 the Synod of Ancyra in Galatia gave deacons the freedom to marry after ordination so long as they obtained the bishop's permission to do so.[73] The implementation of these early ecclesiastical rules was not uniform. Some bishops respected them while others followed their own interpretations of celibacy and marriage. Socrates relates that certain members of the clergy abstained from sexual relations with their wives, but such abstinence was self-imposed. [74] Basing its views on Scriptures, the Nestorian Synod of Mar Acacius (AD 486) in Bet Laphat allowed bishops, priests, and deacons to be married after their ordination, and considered marriage chaste and holy. The Nestorian Synod of Mar Babai in Beit Aramaye (AD 497) confirmed this ruling and allowed the Patriarch, bishops, priests, and deacons to marry.[75] The imposition of clerical celibacy was challenged by those who believed that marriage was permissible for the clergy and that not every ordained person could bear the burden of celibacy. In 696, the council of Trullo imposed celibacy on bishops, but allowed priests and deacons to be married before their ordination

71 Cf. Socrates, *HE.* I, 11; tr. 18. Cf. Sozomen, *HE.* I, 23.
72 Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church* II. 72.
73 Canon 10; cf. Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles* I, 1; 312.
74 Cf. Socrates, *HE.* V, 22; tr. 132.
75 Cf. Chabot, *Synodicon Orientale*, 303-306, 312.

(Canon 3, 6, 13, 48). The council of Trullo, however, did not represent the opinion of the church as a whole. It was convened after the major schism caused by Chalcedon. Despite having been a Greek council, however, its canons were gradually accepted by the non-chalcedonian as well as by the chalcedonian churches. The Roman (Latin) Catholic Church was unique in going beyond these measures. In 1123, during the first Lateran council, celibacy was definitely imposed on bishops, priests, deacons, and sub-deacons.[76] The Eastern churches with their different denominations did not follow the decision of the Roman church and, to the present day they impose celibacy only on bishops. Priests and deacons may still be married, if they wish, before their ordination.

What is important to note in this brief survey of the imposition of celibacy on the clergy is that most of the documents, as well as the defenders of the clergy, belong to Greco-Latin Christianity. Consequently, most Western vocabulary and theology regarding celibacy, virginity, chastity, and marriage was given definite shape by the Greco-Latin view of marriage and celibacy. This does not correspond very closely with the theology and language of the Syrian church. Whereas the terms *celibacy*,[77] *virginity*,[78] and *chastity*[79] are more or less synonymous in the Western tradition, where they have been placed in opposition to the state of marriage, in the early Eastern church, and especially in the Syrian church, this is not the case. In that environment each term has a different significance and the resulting view of celibacy, marriage, and virginity differs in many respects.[80] In the early Syrian church, virginity had two main meanings: - Everything in the creation is born in a virgin state, which is the virginity of nature. That state was spoiled by Adam's sin and so all creation has lost its virginity. - Virginity is recovered through baptism and every Christian, married or single, becomes a virgin in Christ. Through baptism the Christian is born again in Him, and recovers his original virginity. That original virginity implies

76 Cf. Vernet, 'Celibat', 387-89; Bingham, *Antiquities* I, 153.

77 'Celibacy: unmarried, single; the state of living unmarried', *Oxford Dictionary*.

78 'Virginity: the condition of being or remaining in a state of chastity; abstinence from or avoidance of all sexual relations; bodily chastity, as a virtue of great commendation, or as conferring especial merit or sanctity; the mode of life characterized by this, esp. as adopted from religious motives', *Oxford Dictionary*.

79 'Chastity: Purity from unlawful sexual intercourse; continence. Abstinence from all sexual intercourse; virginity, celibacy'. *Oxford Dictionary*.

80 Some scholars have failed to discriminate between virginity as synonymous with celibacy and purity as a negation of the married life in the early Syrian tradition; cf. Guillaumont, *Aux origines*, 33 ff; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 106-108; Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 115-116; Beck, 'Ein Beitrag zur Terminologie', 254-267; Baker, 'Syriac and the origins', 348 ff. The distinction between virginity and celibacy is crucial. In the early Syrian tradition there is no evidence at all that virginity always meant consecrated celibacy. One cannot assume that the 'ihidaya' of the early Syrian church sought to fulfil the conditions of the unmarried state because he sought to remain holy and chaste.

the total purity of the human person. God alone dwells in man and man belongs to God completely. Thus, one can not identify virginity with celibacy in every case. Virginity is also a concept of total purity. It is evident that in the Syrian church chastity was never identified either with celibacy or with virginity. The church made no objection to sexual intercourse within a Christian marriage, where it was considered a chaste act.[81]

5. QADDISHUTHA: HOLINESS - CONTINENCE

The hermit was called a holy one, a *qaddisha*[82] because he kept himself pure from the sinful world:

And because they saw lusts[83] *in the world,*
they laid hold of holiness,[84]
So that the holiness of their bodies
should permit them to inherit the Kingdom.[85]

In the early Syrian church *Qaddishutha* referred to the condition of someone who, although involved in the corruption of a sinful marriage, remained completely unspoiled like God, the Holy One. The *Didascalia* warns Christians of those who preached that the unmarried state was one of holiness: *Indeed, many of them were teaching that a man should not take a wife, this was holiness. And through holiness they glorified opinions of their heresies.*[86] For early Syrian eremitism *qaddishutha* was not a rejection of marriage, but the condition of those who rejected sensual, worldly pleasures which were brought about by the corruption of Adam and Eve's marriage after the Fall.[87] *Qaddishutha* is sometimes confused with continence, perhaps on account of the common elements which the two words contain. They are not identical, however, because whereas continence embraces all the practices of the eremitic life, *qaddishutha* refers only in part to sexual continence in the context of a sinful marriage. *Qaddishutha* is a more general term indicating the holiness of God and man in God. According to *Antony's life* of Symeon, the Abbot of the monastery made Symeon pursue a continent life, which meant a life of prayer, fasting, vigil and mortification.[88] The hermits were strongly impressed by the idea that the Holy Spirit bestowed on them the *qaddishutha* of God and protected them from the

81 Cf. *Didascalia*, XXVI, 257-263.
82 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 525, 527; *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Lamy), 18, 28; Chrysostom, *Matt.* LXXII, 3; *Julian Saba*, III, 2; XII, 8; Ephrem, *Nisibene Hymns*, XV, 9.
83 I have altered the translation from 'lewedness' to 'lusts', for the Syriac word means lust.
84 I have altered the translation from 'chastity' to 'holiness', for the Syriac word is *qaddishuta* and not *nakputa*.
85 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 393-397; tr. 478.
86 *Didascalia*, XXIII, 230; tr. 213.
87 Cf. *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Beck) IV, 6; X; *Julian Saba*, III, 2; XXIII, 4.
88 Cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 493.

sinful world. As a result of this belief the hermit was considered a man of the Holy Spirit.[89]

6. MISSION

Syrian eremitism was very open and most of the hermits preached among their people. After long preparation in the life of mortification and silence, it was believed that the hermit could involve himself with such missionary work with ease. The hermit was purified of sin world and so considered ready to carry Christ to others. The hermit who was healed from darkness and ignorance became a healer himself and so transmitted the glory of God.

a. Hospitality

In early Syrian eremitism hospitality was a sacred duty. In the eyes of many hermits it was so important that it became a cornerstone of their spirituality.[90] In spite of his poverty and his life of mortification Abraham provided an example of this generous hospitality: *While wearing down his body with much labors, he was inexhaustible in the services he rendered others. For strangers who came a beed was ready, glistening and select rolls were offered, wine of a fine bouquet, fish and vegetables and all the other things that go with them; he himself at midday sat with the diners, offering to each portions of the fare provided, giving goblets to all and bidding them drink, in imitation of his great namesake - I mean the Patriarch - who served his guests but did not dine with them.*[91] Polychronius embraced the feet of his visitors as a sign of humility and respect: *Nevertheless, although emitting such rays of grace, being laden with every kind of achievement and gathering each day the wealth of philosophy, he is so modest in spirit that he embraces both feet of each of those who come to see him, while putting his forehead to the ground, whether he is a soldier, an artisan, or a peasant.*[92] Yet hospitality became a real danger for some hermits, especially open-air hermits, who were flooded with visitors: *Since some people accuse him of peevishness of character and are annoyed at the love of solitude and tranquility, it is after saying a few words on this that I shall bring the account to an end. As I have said already, he* (James of Cyrrhestica) *lies exposed to everyone's gaze, being neither fenced round with an enclosure nor sheltered by some hut or tent; each of his visitors, because hindered by no barrier, goes to him at once and wants to make conversation. Other lovers of this philosophy have enclosures and doors and enjoyment of tranquility; the recluse opens when*

89 Cf. Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 473, 475; Chrysostom, *Mat.*, XXXIII, 5; LV, 6-8; Nagel, *Askese*, 69 ff; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 307 ff; *HR*, VII, 2; XI, 4; XIII, 8; XVII, 5; XXVI, 1, 25.

90 Cf. *HR*., III, 12, 14, 20; V, 2; VIII, 3, 15; IX, 4; X, 5; XIV, 2; XVII, 7; XXIV, 1-2, 8; XXV, 1; XXVI, 11, 12; XXIX, 3; XXX, 2.

91 *HR*, XVII, 7; tr. 122-123.

92 *HR*, XXIV, 8; tr. 157.

wishing to, delays as long as he wants, and has his fill of divine contemplation as long as he wishes. But here there is none of this; and this is the essential reason why he gets annoyed with those who are a nuisance at the very time of prayer. If at his bidding they go away at once, he again concentrates on prayer; but if they continue to be a nuisance and do not obey when ordered once or even twice, then he is annoyed an sends them away with rebuke.[93] A similar thing happened to Eusebius of Asikha who refused to receive all his visitors because he believed his contemplative life was in danger: *Intercourse with the multitud exhausted him completely, for perceiving the vision of God continuously, he v not willing to draw his mind away from it. Nevertheless, despite the fervor of love, he allowed a few of his friends to unblock the doorway and pass with offering them the nourishment of the divine oracles, he ordered them, when the departed again, to block up the doorway with clay. After judging it better to avoid meeting these few, he walled up the entrance completely, fixing in the doorway a huge stone. Through a hole he spoke with a few of his friends, but without being seen, for so was it contrived; and through it too he received his meagre food.*[94]

Alexander the Sleepless (Akoimetos) reproved his brother Peter, for he did not behave according to the sacred rule of hospitality in the monastic life: *After four days' journey they came to the place where his brother was, his mother's son; he was archimandrite of a large community. Alexander wanted to discover whether he walked according to the Gospel of the Lord. Taking just one brother, he knocked at the gate. As was customary, the gate-keeper said to him, 'Wait: let me tell the abbot, and then you can come in'. He did not wait, however, but followed the brother, wanting to find out whether the abbot would be moved to anger against the brother. But his holy brother Peter - for that was his name - seeing his true brother after thirty years, recognised him at once. For our nature is such that even in uncertainty, we recognise our own. Falling at his feet, he clasped them, begging forgiveness for what had happened. But the blessed one reproved him rather severely, saying, 'Our father Abraham received strangers and served them himself; and this was what our Lord Jesus Christ decreed'. And shaking out his garments,*[95] *he went on his way. The most holy Peter, with all the brothers, besought him weeping to stay with them just one day, and he declined. But after teaching them of poverty and divine love, he set off for Antioch.*[96] Of course, there were certain hermits who refused to have any contacts with people whatsoever because they lead their lives in complete silence.[97]

93 *HR*, XXI, 32; tr. 145.
94 *HR*, XVIII, 2; tr. 127.
95 Cf. *Acts*, 18, 6.
96 Stoop, *Alexander*, 37.
97 Cf. Acepsimas (*HR*, XV, 4); Limnaeus (*HR*, XXII, 3); and others (*HR*, XXVII, 1).

b. The Care of the Poor

Caring for the poor was an important activity for the Syrian hermits, and an aspect of their hospitality that dealt especially with those who were strangers or whom society had neglected: *So zealously did he* (Maesymas) *attend to the care of strangers and the poor that he threw open his doors to all who came. He is said to have had two jars, one of grain and the other of oil, out of which he always supplied those in need, and which he always had full, since the blessing given to the widow of Zarephath had been attached to these jars as well: 'the same Lord is of all, rich for all who call upon him',*[98] *and just as he ordered her ir and to pour forth, providing the sheaves of the seeds of her hospitality, so he ave to his wonderful man an abundance to equal his zeal.*[99] Like Theodoret, Symeon the Stylite regarded Elijah as an example of one who took care of the poor and who organised others to do the same:[100] Symeon Stylites was eager to carry out this rule himself and to feed the poor and the orphans from his column: *How many orphans and widows were sustained and supported* (after our Lord) *by the standing of the Blessed One* (i.e. Symeon).[101] Alexander the Sleepless (Akoimetos), despite being very busy with preaching, did not neglect the care of the poor in Antioch: *Seeing that he* (Alexander) *could speak freely to everyone and that everyone listened to him gladly and was ready to do what he commanded, and that he enjoyed great glory and honour, Alexander found the opportune moment and set about caring for the poor of the city. Here too one can wonder at the saint's magnanimity in that this man, hounded from place to place and with absolutely no possessions, saw to it by his zeal that there was even a hostel built. He gathered together the rich men of the city, admonished them according to the godly wisdom that was in him and prepared them to provide for the needs of the hostel.*[102]

Care of the poor, of orphans, and of strangers was an important duty in the early Syrian church. The *Didascalia* saw this as one of the most important activites of the bishop.[103] Judas Thomas spent all the money he received from the King on food and shelter for the poor.[104] In the early Syrian church looking after the poor was closely associated with hospitality. Such consideration was offered to everybody, whatever their beliefs or social level.[105]

98 *Rom.* 10, 12.
99 *HR*, XIV, 2; tr. 111; cf. *1Kings*, 17, 9-16.
100 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 573.
101 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 547; tr. 136; cf. *ibid.* 572-573.
102 Stoop, *Alexander*, 39.
103 Cf. *Didascalia*, XVII.
104 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 59.
105 Cf. *Didache*, 11-13; *Acts of Thomas*, 3; *Didascalia*, III, 30 (5); IX, 115.

c. Social Justice

The Syrian hermits believed in equality among people and they always defended the rights of the oppressed, urging governors to act justly towards their subjects. Maesymas stood firmly against the governor of the council of Antioch who had imposed heavy taxes on the people: *The story is told that the master of this village once made a visit - he was Letoius, preeminent in the council of Antioch, but engulfed in the darkness of impiety. He demanded crops fom the peasants with more severity than was needed. The man of God advised and exhorted him to show kindness, and expatiated on pity and mercy. But he remained implacable, until he learnt by experience the penalty for obstina When he had to depart, and his carriage was ready and, taking his seat, ordered the muleteer to urge on the mules, they pulled with all their strength, eager haste to pull the carriage-people, yet the wheels werre as if fastened wit iron and lead. When all the peasants together tried to move the wheels with bars and achieved nothing more, one of Letoius' well-wishers, who was seated next to him, indicated the cause, telling how the holy old man was imprecating a curse and that it was right to conciliate him. Accordingly, leaping from the carriage, he entreated the one he had insulted, and falling prostrate at his feet and clasping his dirt rags begged him to relax his anger. The other accepting the petition and transmitting it to the Master, freed the wheels from their invisible bonds and made the chariot move as usual.*[106]

Many similar stories are related in the *Syriac life* of Symeon. The governors often intended to impose heavy taxes on the poor but Symeon defended their rights. He tried first to convince the governors they should act more justly towards the people and decrease their taxes; when they rejected Symeon's intervention they were chastised by divine judgement and suffered bodily afflictions. On account of their sufferings the unjust governors felt obliged to obey Symeon and to treat the poor more fairly; as a result, they were cured of their diseases.[107] The early Syrian hermits were always depicted by their biographers as liberators and defenders of the unwanted and rejected, and as protectors of those crushed by unjust government. Theodoret and Chrysostom both relate the story of the hermits' intervention on behalf of a populace compelled by the emperor to pay heavier taxes: *In consequence of his continual wars the emperor was compelled to impose heavy taxes on the cities of the empire. The city of Antioch refused to put up with the new tax, and when the people saw the victims of its exaction subjected to torture and indignity, then, in addition to the usual deed which a mob is wont to do when it is seizing an opportunity for disorder, they pulled down the bronze statue of the illustrious*

106 *HR*, XIV, 4; tr. 11-112.
107 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 581-587.

Placilla, for so was the empress named, and dragged it over a great part of the town. On being informed of these events the emperor, as was to be expected, was indignant.... He further threatened to burn and destroy the town and reduce it to the rank of a village.... But the athletes of virtue (the hermits) *dwelling at the foot of the hill, of whom at that time there were many of the best, made many supplications and entreaties to the imperial officers.*[108] Macedonius the hermit's mediation proved effective. The governors of Antioch and the emperor ceased their oppression and even regretted their acts of violence. Here, Macedonius speaks to the council of Antioch: *'Say, dear Sirs, to the emperor; you are not only an emperor, you are also a man. Bethink you, therefore, not only of your sovereignty, but also of your nature. You are man, and you reign over your fellow men. Now the nature of man is formed after the image and likeness of God. Do not, therefore, thus savagely and cruelly order the massacre of God's image, for by punishing His image you will anger the Maker. Think how you are acting thus in your wrath for the sake of a brazen image. Now all who are endued with reason know how far a lifeless image is inferior to one alive and gifted with soul and sense. Take into account, too, that for one image of bronze we can easily make many more. Even you yourself cannot make one single hair of the slain.' After the good men had heard these words they reported them to the emperor, and quenched the flame of his rage.... The emperor... was grieved and distressed when he heard that some had been executed by the magistrates.*[109]

Similarly, after Jacob of Nisibis became the bishop of Nisibis, *his labors took on increase and became far more numerous than they had been before; to fasting, sleeping on the ground and wearing sackcloth was now added the whole range of care for the needy - I mean looking after widows and tending orphans, reproving the perpetraitors of injustice and justly assisting their victims.*[110] Finally, Abraham defended the population of a Lebanese village against heavy taxes and tried to obtain money to assist the poor with their payments.[111] He spent the *whole day on the lawsuits of those in dispute, some he would persuade to be reconciled with each other, while to those who would not obey his gentle teaching he applied compulsion. No wrongdoer went away victorious over justice through audacity; to the wronged party he always accorded the just man's portion, making him invisible and stronger than the one who wanted to wrong him. He was like an excellent physician who always prevents the excess of the humors and contrives the equilibrium of the elements.*[112]

108 Theodoret, *HE*, V, 19; tr. 145; cf. *HR*, XIII, 7; Chrysostom, *Stat.* XVII, 3-6; XVIII, 12.
109 Theodoret, *HE*, V, 19; tr. 146.
110 *HR*, I, 7; tr. 15.
111 Cf. *HR*, XVII, 3.
112 *HR*, XVII, 8; tr. 123.

d. Distress and Catastrophes

The Syrian hermits were deeply involved with the miserable lives of their people. They worked to improve conditions, trying to help everybody to be happy in God's creation. Limnaeus was full of humanity towards his fellow-men; he gathered the blind and taught them how to glorify the Lord: *Let us from a different indication show his humanity: he gathered together many who were deprived of their sight and had been compelled to beg. Building dwellings on both sides, east and west, he invited them to live there and sing hymns to God, telling those who visited him to supply the food they needed. He himself, immured in the middle, exhorts both groups to hymnody. It is possible to hear them hymning the Master continually; and he continues to show such humanity towards his fellow-men.*[113]

The hermits also intervened in times of natural catastrophe: *And after a lo time there was a lack of rain in the land of the east and in this land, such that earth on account of the drought was near to fail to produce seed. And ma people assembled from the east with the inhabitants of the mountain, and came with a request to the man of God* (Symeon the Stylite), *beseeching him and supplicating him that he would ask his God concerning this thing, that he should have compassion, and give hope to creation. He answered them, saying, 'Turn to God and bring an offering to the Lord your God; turn away from evil and do good; then, turning, immediately he will have mercy upon you.' So they did as he comanded them; whereupon the clouds poured forth rain and filled their cistern as usual. And the reaper filled his hand, and the poor ate and were satisfied, and they praised and blessed God their nourisher.*[114] The hermits considered any distress caused directly by nature or by human will to be the result of man's sin and rebellion against God.[115] Alexander Akoimetos interceded on the behalf of

113 *HR*, XXII, 7; 152. In Palestine there was an infirmary in every monastery: 'On sait en effet, que les monastères comportaient des infirmeries, que des médecins même y étaient attachés; par exemple, au Ve siècle, dans le monastère de Théodose le Cénobiarque, en Palestine, il y avait un service organisé pour les moines atteints de troubles psychiques, de même qu'à Gaza nous connaissons bien le régime de l'infirmerie du monastère de Seridos. Dès le début du Ve siècle, Diadoque de Photice formulait les régles suivantes: 'Rien n'empêche aux temps de la maladie d'appeler des médecins....', Canivet, *Monachisme*, 136-137.

114 *Syriac Life*, 554; tr. 140; Cf. *Antony Life*, 501 (21); *HR*, XXVI, 19; VIII, 14.

115 In the *Life of Antony* this view of sin and misery is prominent: 'Un autre prodige eut lieu dans les jours de Siméon. La grande menace des terreurs s'étant avancée sur la terre entière, toute l'Anatolie et Antioche se portaient vers lui [vers Siméon], et lui demandaient du supplier Dieu. Car il y a avait eu beaucoup de chutes de maisons et des morts en nombre considérable, au point que le juste aussi était secoué avec la colonne, comme un roseau sous le vent. Et ainsi pleurant avec eux il dit à la foule: 'Frères, tous sont sortis de la voie, tous ensemble sont devenus de nulle valeur, (il n'y a pas un homme qui fasse le bien), il n'y en a pas un seul. Vous ne m'écoutez pas, mais, pour que chacun ait l'avantage sur son voisin, vos prostitutions et vos crimes ont surabondé. En verité, je vous le dis, frères, il m'est plus facile

sinful people to give fertility to their fields: *Certain wicked men of affluence, darkened in their minds, rose up and said to him, 'Have you come to us to impoverish us?' The blessed one cursed these men who were ungrateful for the gifts of God, and in that encampment there was no rain for three years because of them. Later, discovering the cause of God's anger, all the people came together with one accord to root out of the encampment those who were responsible. They were terrified and took refuge in the church, atoning for their sin with tears. The rest of the crowd, seeing this and fearing that the same might happen to them, went and asked the bishops of the Romans to make respresentations by letter on their behalf to the blessed Alexander, since they had heard that he was in Antioch. They regarded this with great concern, thinking that he had gone to Antioch to intercede with the commander against 'hem. When the bishops heard this, they hastened to write to Alexander asking im to beseech God on behalf of the encampment, and have mercy on its ihabitants. When he received the letter and learned from it of the people's suffering, the saint wept bitterly before the Lord, saying, 'Who am I, my Lord, that you have thus heard me and abused this blameless people? I thank you, Master, that you have always heard me, sinner as I am. And now I beseech your compassion to have mercy on the poor, and restore to them also the crops for the three years of barrenness, and make known to me that I am your servant'. When he had prayed thus, believing unhesitatingly that God would do as he asked, he sent the people away saying, 'In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ go your way, brothers'. And according to his word, in the fourth year there was unprecedented abundance in that encampment....*[116] As sin was understood as a result of man's darkness and ignorance, the hermits always tried to ameliorate human misery and to cleanse the impurity of sin by promoting God's love and peace.[117]

e. Parishes and the Hermits in the Cities

As we have seen, some hermits were ordained priests and bishops.[118] When this happened they moved from the deserts and the mountains into the midst of society. The change of environment did not alter the Syrian hermit's way of life. When James of Nisibis was compelled to be a bishop of Nisibis, his move to the city did not alter his eremitic life: *Because he was conspicuous for these actions and beloved by all and his name circulated to everyone's mouth, he was compelled to accept the office of bishop, receiving the charge of his native city. Although he exchanged that life on the hills and chose against his will to dwell a*

de m'entretenir avec le Maître qu'avec vous, incrédules....', Festugière, *Antioche*, 504, 26.

116 Stoop, *Alexander*, 34.

117 For more details on the work of the hermits among the poor and among the sinful, cf. Vööbus, 'Einiges Über die Karitative'; Nagel, *Askese*, 75 ff; Dublanchy, 'Ascétique', 2076.

118 Cf. in this work pp. 224-228.

city, he did not alter either his food or his clothing, but although there was a shift of place his way of life underwent no change.[119] Similarly, while Julian Saba held episcopal office he did not abandon his ascetic life but maintained it despite his episcopal duties. For a period of fifty-eight years he combined ascetic and civic virtues, managing to unite the strictness of one and the openness and tolerance of the other.[120] In spite of becoming a bishop, Aphthonius did not give up his ascetic life; he even remained head of his ascetic community at Zeugma: *That divine Aphthonius, after presiding over the choir for more than forty years, received the episcopal see, but without changing either his rough ascetic cloak or his tunic made from goat's hair; and he ate the same food as before his episcopate. Despite taking on this charge he did not tend that flock any less, but spent most of his days there, now resolving the strife of those quarreling, no exercising care of those wronged by anyone, at other times addressi exhortation to his disciples; and he performed each of these tasks while, between stitching the rags of his companions or cleaning lentils or washin grain or doing something else of the kind. After having thereby adorned his episcopate and increased his virtue, he reported with this cargo to the divine harbor.*[121]

Whatever his ministry might become and wherever he was obliged to settle, a hermit remained a hermit. Despite the duties imposed on the hermit, his eremitic life was not inextricably involved with any specific cadre but could be practiced anywhere: *All the time of his episcopacy* (Abraham's), *bread was for him superfluous, water superfluous, a bed useless, and use of fire superfluous. At night he chanted forty psalms antiphonally, doubling the length of the prayers that occur in between; the rest of the night he sat on a chair, allowing a brief rest to his eyelids... this wonderful man throughout the time of his episcopacy took neither bread nor pulses nor greens cooked by fire and even water, which is considered by those reputed clever about these things to be the first of the elements in utility; but it was lettuce, chicory, celery, and all plants of the kind that he made his food and drink, rendering superfluous the skills of baking and cooking. In the fruit-season fruit supplemented his needs. His food he took after the evening liturgy.*[122]

Syrian eremitism was very flexible in its structure. From the beginning it brought together different ways of life. Among them, that of those hermits who chose to live in the midst of society, not on account of any clerical obligations but simply because they believed that the eremitic life did not belong only to the

119 *HR*, I, 7; tr. 15.
120 *HR*, II, 9; tr. 28.
121 *HR*, V, 8; tr. 61.
122 *HR*, XVII, 6; tr. 122.

desert and the mountains: *One can learn from them that those who choose to practise philosophy are harmed not at all by life in towns and villages; for this man* (Maesymas) *and those like him responsible for the service of God have shown that it is possible even for those who go about among many to attain the very summit of the virtues.*[123] Theodoret mentions that many hermits lived in towns and villages, and were preeminent in town life as well as in the eremitic life. Of Asclepius, for example: *He is said, at the time he was numbered with the brethren who inhabit the village, to have embraced the ascetic and disciplined life, and to have derived no harm from mixing with the multitude. Therefore, for having been preeminent in each life, both the social and the eremitical, he will with good reason recieve the honor of a double crowning. Many others also have emulated his virtue; not only ours but also the neighboring cities and villages are full of this philosophy. One of these is the most divine James, a recluse in a cell at a village called Nimouza....*[124]

Rabbula, who left the eremitic life to become the bishop of Edessa, was very successful in his ministery among his people: *When he was made bishop, Rabbula became a haven of knowledge of God, not only for Syria and Armenia and Persia but for the whole world. For from the start, the Lord had established schools of the Syriac language in this city* (Edessa). *For leading citizens (that is, of the surrounding towns) and men of substance sent their children to be educated there. So when Bishop Rabbula took office, he made haste - the Holy Spirit working with him - to unite everyone in the true and certain faith, striving always to act in accordance with his teacher. And of him one can truly say, 'It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher'.*[125] *I shall also relate this good work which this blessed man performed, for it will be of benefit to my listeners. To widows and orphans, he became nothing less than a father. Twice a month he summoned the foreign children of pagan families from the schools, and gathered them together and taught them the word of truth. When they had received the seal of the Holy Spirit and thus enjoyed the greatest of benefits, they returned to their home countries. As time went on they acquired good habits of behaviour, and passed them on to their children even to this day. Thus the grace of God shone forth even in those parts of the world. And he did this, not for two or three years, but for thirty. Let us point out that this man's achievements and his virtues came about through the efforts of his teacher* (Alexander Akoimetos). *For he struggled no less than this man. I can truthfully say that his works were such as to put him on a level with the prophet Elisha: and the new disciple among them.*[126]

123 *HR*, XIV, 5; tr. 112. Cf. IV, 1.
124 *HR*, XXV, 1-2; tr. 158.
125 *Mt.* 10, 25.
126 Stoop, *Alexander*, 22.

Many hermits lived near villages, where they established stable and regular relations with the local people, preaching divine wisdom to them.[127] Generally speaking, the early Syrian hermits remained very near to their people, who were greatly influenced by their eremitic spirituality.

f. Orthodoxy

The Syrian hermits were often depicted by their biographers as commanders of an army. They were seen as leaders in the church's struggle against heresy and they considered the orthodoxy of their church to be of paramount importance. In 325 James of Nisibis fought against Arius in the council of Nicaea. Along with the other Fathers he upheld the orthodoxy of the Church.[128] When the emperor Valens adopted the theological position of Arius and tried to impose it on the Church, Julian Saba, along with other orthodox Christians, toc' a stand against him, leaving the desert and travelling to Antioch to encourage th people in their struggle against the emperor.[129] Theodoret reserves special prai for the orthodoxy of Marcianus: *I myself, in addition to this, admire hi strictness over the divine doctrines, for he abhorred the madness of Arius, which at that time was being kindled by imperial authority; he abominated the folly of Apollinarius; he fought nobly against those of Sabellius's persuasion, who lump the three hypostases into one; and he rejected utterly those called Euchites, who hide under a monastic disguise the disease of the Manichees.*[130] Theodoret adds a story about Marcianus' orthodoxy, relating how he dealt with Abraham, an elderly hermit who still celebrated Easter according to the old calendar: *Misled by a certain simplicity, he* (Abraham) *presumed to celebrate Easter as previously, in apparent ignorance of the rule laid down on this matter by the others at Nicaea, preferring to be tied to the ancient custom - many others at this time suffered from the same ignorance.*[131] *But the great Marcianus used many*

127 Cf. Ammianus (*HR*, IV, 2); Palladius (*HR*, VII, 1); Aphraates (*HR*, VIII, 1); Maris (*HR*, XX, 2); Asclepius (*HR*, XXV,1); Thalelaeus (*HR*, XXVIII,1,5); Marana and Kyra (*HR*, XXIX, 2).

128 Cf. *HR*, I, 10.

129 Cf. *HR*, II, 15-21.

130 *HR*, III, 16; tr. 44. Price, *History*, 47 comments: 'The emperor Valens (364-378) tried to impose Arianism. Apollinarius's extreme monophysite Christology was most keenly debated between 373 and 381. The monks of the Chalcis region were particularly concerned to uphold the Trinitarian 'three hypostases' formula in the late 370s (see Kelly, *Jerome*, 32-36). For Theodoret on the Euchites or Messalians see *HE*, IV, 10, and *Epitome of Heretical Myths*, IV, 11. They were wandering ascetics who, in contrast to the sobriety and humility of main-stream monasticism, laid claim to every grace and perfection (see A. Guillaumont, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, 10, 1074-83). This polemical streak in Marcianus suggests, but does not prove, that he is the Marcian who wrote some surviving ascetical and controversial fragments; cf. van Roey, *Studia Patristica*, XII, 160-171.'

131 'At Antioch, and in several neighbouring provinces, Easter was traditionally celebrated in immediate proximity to the Jewish Passover, a practice that was condemned in 325 at the Council of Nicaea. But the older custom continued to have its adherents, who were

arguments on many occasions to try and lead Old Man Abraham - for so the local people called him back into the harmony of the Church, and on seeing him obstinate, he publicly separated himself from communion with him. But when time had passed that inspired man cast off this reproach and embraced the harmony of the divine festival, chanting in truth, 'Blessed are those without reproach on the way, who journey in the law of the Lord',[132] *and this was the achievement of the teaching of the great Marcianus.*[133] It seems that most Syrian hermits were like James of Nisibis, Julian Saba, and Marcianus in their defence of orthodoxy.[134] St. Jerome suffered greatly when he found himself on the wrong side of the Syrian hermits' zeal for orthodoxy: *I am called a heretic for preaching that the Trinity is consubstantial. I am accused of the Sabellian heresy for proclaiming with unwearied voice that there are threee subsistent persons, rue, undiminished, and perfect. If I am accused by Arians, it is deserved. If by he orthodox, who criticize a faith of this kind, they have ceased to be orthodox. Or, of they please, let them condemn me as a heretic with the West, a heretic with Egypt, that is to say, with Damasus and Peter. Why do they condemn one man, passing over his associates? If a brook flows with a slight stream, that is not the fault of its bed but of its source. I am ashamed to say: out of the caves of our* (hermits') *cells we condemn the world if, while wallowing in sackcloth and ashes, we pass judgement on bishops. why this regal attitude under a garb of penitence? A chain and squalid hair are evidence, not of a diadem, but of weeping.*[135] In their struggle against heresy the hermits were undoubtedly influenced by the spirituality of the early Syrian church in general. The church did not tolerate heretics and tried continually to purge its congregation of any dogma alien to its own form of Christian teaching.[136]

g. Healing and Miracles

If sickness and malformation in the human being and in the rest of creation are caused by man's sin, harmony and perfection are the result of God's peace and love in the universe. Accordingly, the hermit, the man of God, sought to restore God's image in man. By spreading God's own love and peace they tried to bring back the creation to its original state of harmony and perfection. One way of achieving this was through healing. Healing represented man's liberation

excommunicated by the Antiochene Council of 341 and are the objects of attack in an anonymous homily of 387 (published in Sources Chrétiennes, Vol. 48)', Price, *History*, 47.

132 *Ps.* 119, 1.

133 *HR*, III, 17; tr. 44-45.

134 Cf. *HR*, VIII, 5-10; X, 6; XXI, 15-18; XXVI, 27; Chrysostom, *Matt.* LV, 7; Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 48 (48-51); Stoop, *Alexandre*, 689 (40).

135 Jerome, *Lettre*, XVII, 2-3; tr. 76-77.

136 Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 6, 2; 7; 9; 16; *Mag.* 4; 8; 9; 11; *Tral.* 6; 7; 10; 11; *Phil.* 2, 1; 3; 6; *Smyr.* 2; 4; *Poly.* 3; Theophilus of Antioch, II, 14; *Didascalia*, V, 59-60; VII, 85; XV, 166; XXIII; XXVI.

from sin and darkness and the restoration of God's perfection both in man and in the creation: *Then the Isaurian chief, as he stood in misery, said to the Blessed One* (Symeon the Stylite), *'My sins were stirred up against me in thy coming to me. But I beseech thee, offer up petition on my behalf.' The Blessed One said, 'If indeed thou askest that I should offer petition on they behalf, deliver into my hands this captivity which thou hast taken captive* (some Christians taken by the Isaurians). *For lo, their crying has gone up before God. And this trial He sent upon thee* (physical convulsions felt by the chief). *Now this captivity was in number, men and women, four hundred. Then the Isaurian chief besought him that he would pray for him, and he would give the captivity into his hands. So the saint kneeled down and prayed. And when he finished his prayer, he stretched out to him his right hand and said to him, 'In the name of the Lord Jesus Chri be healed.' And immediately the unclean spirit departed from the man, and I was recovered, and he delivered all the captivity into the hands of the Blesse One. And the Blessed One, on his part, as he led away all the captivity, commanded them that they should tell no one anything of what Christ had performed through his hands, for the deliverance of their lives; and he dismissed everyone to his own country in peace.*[137]

Several elements were involved in performing a healing--the name of Jesus, dust, and water: *'In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, take some of this dust which is before thee, and anoint all thy body.' And the boy himself took it in his hands and anointed all his body. Then he commanded, and they brought water, and he blessed it and took it and caused him to drink and threw some on his face. Whereupon the boy was healed from his madness.*[138] The sign of the cross and oil were also used.[139] It is not possible to mention in detail all the acts of healing performed by the Syrian hermits. Many thousands of people were healed and the biographers of early Syrian eremitism could not record all the miracles that were performed.[140] During a healing the hermit became the instrument of God. God Himself performed the healing, using the hermit as his representative. For the hermit, the act of healing required first an act of repentance and a complete rejection of the world of darkness, and a sincere faith in God. Then, the person released from the bonds of sin was able to walk in the path of the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless he had to remain vigilant and to persist in the fight against the Evil One until he became mature in the wisdom of God and

137 *Syriac Life*, 513-514; tr. 115.

138 *Syriac Life*, 533; tr. 127.

139 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 521; 530.

140 On the miracles and the act of healing of the early Syrian hermits, cf. *Syriac Life*, 515-517; 530-533; 544; 547-563; 578; 583; 589-593; 636-643. *Antony Life*, 497-499; 504 (26). *HR*, I, 4-6, 8, 11-12; II, 7, 17-20; III, 9; VI, 2, 5, 14; VII, 2-3; VIII, 9-15; IX, 5-15; X, 5-7; XIII, 9-17; XIV, 3; XV, 2; XVI, 2; XXI, 14; XXIV, 7; XXVI, 13-19; XXVIII, 2.

perfect in Christ's love. The Syrian hermits did not only pray for the healing of men, but even for the conversion and the healing of Satan himself.[141] It was their belief that the whole universe should remain pure and in complete harmony with God's will. The hermit's powers of healing were considered a result of his purity and holiness. He had become one with God and was completely healed from sin; consequently his prayers to God were believed to be a source of healing and grace.

h. Preaching

How many afar off were brought near! And how many were wandering astray and by his word were turned from error to a knowledgee of truth! How many thousands and tens of thousands who heard his commands were brought home and submitted themselves to the yoke of Christ! For who is able to count or reckon the thousands and the tens of thousands innumerable, who while savage came to the sight of him (Symeon the Stylites), *and to his word and to his teaching divine, and joyfully surrendered themselves to the fear of Christ, and became workers and servants of the Truth! For the fame of his benefactions spread, which our Lord did by his hand, from end to end of creation. And that was fulfilled which the Prophet said, 'Their glad message is gone out in all the earth and their words to the ends of the world.'*[142] What is said about Symeon in this passage could be applied to most of the early Syrian hermits, who pursued a mission of preaching and conversion in the whole of the Syrian Orient. Through their hospitality, their work with the poor, their priestly life, and their acts of healing the hermits preached the Kingdom of God to everybody. They became instruments of the Holy Spirit, who spoke through them, and they transmitted the word of life to the people.[143]

After seven years in the desert, Alexander Akoimetos left his retreat to preach the Gospel: *Once he felt himself strong in faith, Alexander undertook to preach the Gospel, lest he should be condemned along with the lazy and idle servant.*[144] *Preaching was a hard task which required too much time and faith. Quite often, to strengthen the hermit, God intervened and performed a miracle in order to convert the pagan heart:*[145] *He* (Rabbula) *said, 'I am ready to learn about all this madness of yours through which you have not only alarmed us, but you also never cease dishonouring our gods'. Hearing this, the blessed one* (Alexander) *said, 'Hear of the power of our God and the mysteries of our faith'. And he began to speak to him about God's compassion towards man and the power of the holy Scriptures, beginning from the creation of the world and going*

141 Cf. *Antony Life*, 499 (19).
142 *Syriac Life*, 544; tr. 134-135; cf. *Ps.* 19, 4; *Rom.* 10, 18; *1Thess.* 1, 8.
143 Cf. Chrysostom, *Matt.* XXXIII, 5; LXVIII, 4; LXIX, 4.
144 Stoop, *Alexander*, 9.
145 Cf. Stoop, *Alexander*, 10-13

up to the economy of the Cross. They kept arguing back and forth all that day and the next night, remaining without food. Nor did they give themselves up to sleep; but as he pointed to written testimony of the virtues of the saints and their boldness towards their Master, going through the divinely-inspired Scriptures, he came to the prophet Elijah who three times brought down fire from heaven....[146] *It is reported that during the baptism of Rabbula the whole city was converted to the Christian faith: Again, God performed many miracles through him* (Alexander). *For when he* (Rabbula) *had been baptised and come out of the font, his garment was found to be covered with crosses from head to foot. Through this sign, he was further strengthened in faith. Seeing the greatness of the change and the miracle, the citizens believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, with their wives and children. And they came to faith with such ardour that they hastened to receive the seal of holy baptism before they had even heard the word of God. The blessed Alexander, wanting to discover whether they really believed, said to them all, 'If anyone has idols in his house, let him bring them into our midst and destroy them with his own hands'. And one could see the mysterious works of God on that day, because if anyone were pretending to believe and wanted to hide his idols, he could not do so. For each of them hurried to bring his own idols before he could be reproached by someone else; for they knew each other's secrets. In this way, both they and their houses were purified. And in a short time they were firmly established in faith, and were all vouchsafed the grace of holy baptism. In a short time, they and their wives and children became so zealous for their faith that they asked the authorities to exile those who disputed the truth of the faith.*[147] *Later on, Alexander wanted to fulfil all the teaching of the Gospel with his disciple, and he discovered that to do so he should send seventy hermits to preach everywhere: When he had accomplished these feats in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, he sought again what he might ask of God. He found in the Gospel that seventy were chosen from among the disciples to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ; and he prayed to God that from his disciples, the same number might be proved zealots for the faith capable of preaching the word of God to the Gentiles....*[148]

The Syrian hermits seem to have been excellent preachers. In many cases they did not go out to find their congregations; rather people came to them to be instructed by their divine wisdom.[149] When the Syrian hermit went to the desert to lead a life of mortification, he did not neglect his church's command to preach

146 Stoop, *Alexander*, 12
147 Stoop, *Alexander*, 16-17.
148 Stoop, *Alexander*, 31.
149 Cf. *HR*, III, 20; IV, 4; V, 4; VIII, 2; IX, 6.

the Scriptures.[150] On the contrary, he regarded it as his duty to fulfil this call and his silent life in the desert became a school of instruction for a life in Christ.

7. HERMITS AND THE AUTHORITIES

According to their biographers the Syrian hermits seem to have been, generally speaking, on good terms with their Church. Bishop Theodoret of Cyrrhus, for example, enjoyed the hermits' special respect.[151] In spite of their reluctance to become involved in the priestly ministry, in the end the hermits did not resist the will of their church authorities. They accepted the task of leading the flock of Christ and became distinguished shepherds. In many cases the church authorities reserved a special respect and love for the hermits. The hermits often became advisers to the clergy. They stood against heresy and division within the Church, and intervened during times of distress and catastrophes, trying to protect the Church from the Evil One.[152] On the other hand, tense relations existed between Alexander Akoimetos and some bishops on account of his radical plans for the reform of poverty. Another cause of tension was his popularity. As we have seen, people preferred to follow his steps rather than remain with their priests and Abbots:

The bishop of the city (of Antioch), *Theodotos, had been influenced by certain wicked and hypocritical people (i.e. his exarchs); and when he learnt that the blessed Alexander was entering the city with a host of monks singing unceasingly, he gave orders to drive them back harshly with curses and blows. Taking this as their authority, they mercilessly maltreated the servants of God and drove them away. The saint, seeing the armoury of the devil, secretly came into the city with the brothers around midnight and, finding an old bathhouse, had their unceasing hymnody take place as usual. When the bishop found out that they had taken this liberty he was very angry, but did not dare to attack them again. He was afraid of the people of the city because they saw and heard of the blessed man's glorious works and considered him as one of the prophets; so they would leave the church and wait for him, listening to his wonderful teachings.... With great boldness, he took both the commander and the bishop to task for negligence on many matters. To put it simply, he was an instructor and teacher for all. Seeing this and similar things every day, the clergy were admiring to his face, but inwardly they were consumed with resentment. A certain subdeacon named Malchos, a proud man, went to the bishop and said, 'I had just one resource, the revenue from the trials, and the monk Alexander took it away from me. And not only this, but also the glory of the church; and we have*

150 Cf. *Didache*, 2, 3-6; 11, 8; *Didascalia*, III, 27, 37; XV, 158, 168; XXI, 203.

151 Cf. in this work pp. 289-290.

152 Cf. *HR*, II, 15-16; III, 11; VIII, 7; X, 6; XII, 7; *Syriac Life*, 546-47; 573; 578-579; 581: 626 ff.

become the laughing-stock of everyone now that we have suddenly found an instructor. This is the trickster who stirred up the city against our blessed father Porfyrios, and did him innumerable evils. This is the man who covered the faces of the heretics with soot. This is the man who is feared by bishops and rulers, and perhaps also by the demons. This same man is everywhere solitary. This is the man who despises death and creates trouble for everyone. Now he has come here and is doing the same thing. If this man stays in this city, there is nowhere for us to live, because we are now disgraced before everybody. But I pray your angel that I may be authorised to drive him out of the city'. When Malchos had received authority against him, he went to the blessed man with a crowd c litter-bearers and, seized with unbridled rage, at once struck him, saying, 'Ge out of this city, you evil-doer!'. The blessed one, like an innocent lamb, did not respond, but meekly bore this outrage, saying only, 'And that servant's name was Malchos'.[153] *Hearing the readiness of his words, the bystanders wondered at the man's wisdom. Many people gathered against him but could not harm the blessed man, because the people claimed him; and they reported this to the bishop. When they had consulted together, they went to the commander and begged him for one favour: to exile the saint to the city of Chalcis in Syria, and to expel from the city the brothers who were with him....*[154]

The biographer of Alexander states that despite this tense relations between Alexander and some members of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, Alexander did not fear them, but he kept his faith strong in God: *The blessed one feared neither royal authority, nor the threat of rulers, nor the reproach of the people, nor the wicked exhortations of bishops. Nor was any other pretext able to draw him away from the truth, but he put all his detractors to shame by his upright life and complete faith. For he was always heedful of the words of the apostle, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword?'*[155], *and abode by them in his actions.*[156]

As discussed above, relations between the hermits and the civil authorities depended on the behaviour of the governors towards their people. In general the hermits coexisted peacefully with the authorities, though this depended on whether the hermits believed the government was behaving in accordance with the precepts of divine justice.[157] Several emperors were eager to receive the hermits' blessings: *Even the emperor desired to see him* (Abraham), *for fame has wings and easily publishes everything good and bad. He summoned him,*

153 *Jn.* 18, 10.
154 Cf. Stoop, *Alexandre*, 38-41.
155 *Rom.* 8, 35.
156 Stoop, *Alexander*, 3.
157 Cf. *HR*, VIII, 5-14; *Syriac Life*, 582f, 636-638.

and when he arrived embraced him, and considered his rustic goat's hair cloak more honourable than his own purple robe. The choir of the empresses clasped his hands and knees; and they made supplication to a man who did not even understand Greek.[158] Symeon the Stylite received letters from Kings, asking for his prayers and blessings: *For letters of kings poured in, and by the hand of messengers in writings, petition and request with captains of their hosts they were sending to his righteousness. And they besought from his holiness that he would bless them and pray for their kingdom, and the rulers who were under their power, and that the would command them all whatever he pleased. For joyfully without refusal they received his word, and in the beginning of their letters, 'father and teachers who from God is given to us.', they addressed him. And they implored him that freely he would command concerning everything. But whatever praised and glorified God and was for their soul's welfare and help to the poor and establishing their kingdom, he counselled and advised them.*[159] At that time the Governors feared the hermits' anger. The hermits were famous men of God and the governors tried to remain at peace with them in order to avoid God's judgement.[160] On occasion, the civil authorities were so impressed by the holiness of the hermits that they would attend eremitic funerals and honour these holy men.[161]

8. REPUTATION, IMITATION AND PROTECTION

In the eyes of the Christian community the hermits were heroes whose reputation extended throughout the world. Their victory in the life of mortification was a subject of admiration and respect.[162] Alexander Akoimetos was very popular, and many times people attempted to keep him as their shepherd; but he was oliged to flee their cities in hiding in order to carry on with his mission of preaching.[163] Alexander's biographer explained why the hermits were an object of admiration and love: *The common people of the city saw the ascetic struggle that had been begun, the unceasing hymnody, the complete poverty and the glorious mysteries which were accomplished with many wonders; and they came to him readily, truly as to a benefactor and a teacher, and were taught by him about the hope and life to come. In a short time, he became a haven of salvation and an instructor of righteousness for all. And if he was silent, his life cried aloud and constantly reproved those who perverted the*

158 *HR*, XVII, 9; tr. 123; cf. XXVI, 20.

159 *Syriac Life*, 544-545; tr. 135; cf. *ibid.* 556-557, 578, 637-638.

160 Cf. Theodoret, *HE*, III, 19; V, 19-20, 36.

161 Cf. *HR*, XVII, 10; *Syriac Life*, 640ff.

162 Cf. *HR*, II, 3, 6, 9, 13, 17, 19; III, 1; IV, 8, 12; V, 9; VI, 1, 4, 6; VII, 2; VIII, 2, 10; IX, 9; X, 3, 4; XIII, 1, 4; XVI, 2; XVII, 5, 9; XXI, 1, 4, 11; XXIV, 5, 9; XXV, 2; XXVI, 1, 11, 20; XXVII, 1. *Syriac Life*, 541, 543-544, 630-632, 639ff. *Antony Life*, 498 (17). Ephrem. *On Solitaries*, 319; Chrysostom, *Matt.* LV, 6; *Stat.* XVII, 8.

163 Stoop, *Alexander*, 23, 42.

commandments. If they still failed to mend their ways, he used the freedom of speech which he had to rebuke them. Indeed, people saw their great poverty and exactitude, and that they had no possessions except for the parchments on which they had the Holy Scriptures, and that they were constantly performing their hymnody, and living in the body as if bodiless; and in amazement they glorified God who had shown forth even in those parts His glorious mysteries. For, as I have said before, they disdained the things of earth and took care for nothing in this present life.[164] The hermits became examples to be imitated. Their own close adherence to the Word of Jesus Christ encouraged other Christians to follow Him. For their Christian community the hermits represented a true imag of God and a perfect imitation of Christ; they were honoured and held to be perfect model of the Christian life because of their perfect love for Christ.[1] They were considered the protectors not only of Christians, but of the entir world: *The inhabited lands, where injustice rules, is by their prayers upheld. And the world, buried in sin, by their prayers perserved. And the earth, which is shaken by controversies, by their prayers is supported. And the land, which is troubled by vain enquires, the vigils of these men fil with calm. Blessed is the man who is accounted worthy to be a companion of these champions! Blessed is the man who loves them and has imprinted in himself their modes of life! Blessed is the man who in their company began, and completed his course in their labours!...*[166]

Hermits were concerned for anyone who was suffering from sin, from injustice, or from any sickness. At the death of Symeon the Stylite the whole church felt happiness and sadness simultaneously: *Again it was a matter of gladness, that even if he did leave his children orphans in the flesh, yet he like a heavenly eagle soared upward in flight and mounted to the craggy eyrie on high, leaving behind all fears and ascending from all harms. Again, the orphans and widows wept with tears and sighs, saying 'Where shall we seek or where find thee, who sustained and nourished us next to his Lord?' The oppressed remembered and feared, and the downtrodden were disquieted, being depressed and troubled, saying, 'Woe to us, because now is opened against us the mouth of ravening and voracious wolves. And who shall we call to awake him, the strong lion, who slumbers and lies in the death-sleep, from whose roaring they trembled, and from whose terrible voice they hid themselves like foxes in their holes?' The sufferers, too, bewailing him said, 'Whither shall we go, or where seek and find a healer like thee or comparable to thee and similar to thee?*

164 Stoop, *Alexander*, 44.

165 Cf. *HR*, I, 1, 6, 8; II, 11; III, 8; V, 3; VI, 1; VIII, 14; XXVI, 17; XXIX, 7; XXX, 1, 7; XXXI, 7. Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 510ff. Chrysostom, *Matt.* LV, 6, 8; LXVIII, 4-5; LXIX, 3-4; LXXII, 4; *Acts*, XIII; *Tim.* XIV.

166 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 500-520; tr. 479-480.

Before the disease saw thee, it fled, and before the pain had come to thee it vanished; and at thy word more than by all roots and drugs they were cured.' The church, moreover, wept for him with her children, priests and their parishes, and shepherds and their flocks, with grief and with joy.... For in grief they sought him who was to them as a quiet harbour and peaceful asylum. For whenever sprang up any sort of evil, which is always a trouble and disturbance of the good, either winds of sin or hurricane of false doctrine, he stood ready against it.[167]

Hermits were the protectors of society.[168] It was believed that Christ lived in them and that their power was His power.[169] Their bodies, therefore, and anything that touched their bodies, became a relic which could protect believers from the Evil One: *Be ye wise like Nisibis, O ye daughters of Nisibis, for that she laid the body* (of Jacob of Nisibis) *within her, and it became a wall without her. Place ye within you the living body, that it be a wall for your lives!*[170] Syrian spirituality saw no separation between the material and the spiritual worlds; in God they became one. The body of a hermit who became holy and perfect in God was also filled with the Spirit. A relic from his body, therefore, was holy and full of life, while everything that touched a hermit's body was a source of healing, imbued with sanctity and life: *God who loves mankind might show here also that He glorifies those who glorify Him and that the blessed one's action* (the action of Alexander the Sleepless) *were in accordance with God's will, his holy relics performed miracles daily. Unclean spirits could not endure even to hear his name, but were burned as if by fire when they heard it.*[171] The relic was not simply a dead material object; it was full of life and holiness.[172] Potentially, everything in the universe which was accepted as completely pure and holy in God could become a relic.

167 *Syriac Life*, 634-635; tr. 191-192.

168 Brown, *Society and the Holy*, 115-120, 153-165 believes that the rise of the eremitic life was strongly connected with the need for rural patronage in the Syrian Orient. Syrian hermits were men of power who could stand up against the urban government which governed the poor countryside in the name of God. He adds that the reputation of the hermits in rural society was considered by the peasants to be a protection from the urban society which sought to swallow them up. I do not share Brown's view because the Syrian holy man was important in urban society as well as in rural life. There is nothing to show that the hermits chose life in rural regions because they wanted to create and establish a sort of rural patronage in opposition to urban society. Moreover, the inspiration for the hermits' work among the poor and distressed was entirely Scriptural; it did not have its basis in the socio-political problems of urban and rural society.

169 Chrysostom, *Matt.* LXVIII, 4; *Stat.* XVII, 8; *HR*, XVII, 10; *Syriac Life*, 639-644.

170 Ephrem, *Nisibene Hymns*, XIII, 21; tr. 181.

171 Stoop, *Alexander*, 53.

172 Cf. Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 280 ff, 350 ff, 498; *Antony Life*, 499 (18); 506 (33); *HR*, III, 18; IX, 15; XVI, 4; XVII, 10; XXI, 9, 19-20, 30; *Odes of Solomon*, 11, 22; *Acts of Thomas*, 170.

9. PEACE, JOY AND GLORY

The hermit who was healed from his sins became a man of peace, free from trouble, sorrow, or distress; everything in him was calm because God was his hope and protection. Hermits were truly at peace because they were completely free from possessions, covetousness, and sin.[173] The hermit's peace was his stability and serenity and these qualities were a source of reconciliation for people:[174] *The Christian who achieved peace also achieved happiness and joy, and sang unceasingly for the Lord wherever he was, in the desert or in the city, by day or by night: The blessed one* (Alexander Akoimetos) *went through all the desert with the brethren who sang without ceasing.*[175] The Lord shone in his life and creation exalted in his felicity.[176] God's glory was in him and his deed became glorious because he had triumphed over the devil. The eternal crown of a *heavenly athlete* was upon his head: *How great and how many are the athlete of virtue and with which crowns they are decked, is clearly demonstrated by the accounts we have written of them. Even if they do not contain all their contests, yet even a few suffice to show the character of the whole life.*[177] These peaceful and glorious people who dwelt in the heavenly world were equally beautiful; they shone forth with the light of the Lord and everything in them was seen as perfectly pure.[178]

10. PROPHECIES AND VISIONS

The glorious hermit who had the new life of Christ in him became a prophet who could predict events and transmit the message of God. His heart was completely pure and he had ready access to God: *While he* (James of Nisibis) *wore down his body, he provided his soul unceasingly with spiritual nourishment. Purifying the eye of his thought, he prepared a clear mirror for the Holy Spirit; and with unveiled face, beholding as a mirror the glory of the Lord, in the words of the divine Apostle, he was 'changed into his image from glory to Glory, as from the Lord the Spirit.'*[179] *And so his familiar access to God*

173 Cf. Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 110-500; Chrysostom, *Matt.* XXI, 5; XXXIII, 5; LXVIII, 3-4; LXIX, 3; LXX; LXXII, 3; *Priest.* VI, 2; John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 464; *HR*, XII, 5; Ephrem, *Nisibene Hymns*, XIV, 1; XV.

174 Cf. *HR*, IV, 10-11; Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 5490; Nagel, *Askese*, 96-98.

175 Stoop, *Alexander*, 35. 38.

176 Cf. Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 60ff, 100ff, 158, 360; *Nisibene Hymns*, XIII, 1; John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 466; *HR*, II, 16; X, 8; XII, 7; XXVII, 4; XXIX, 7; XXX, 8; *Syriac Life*, 619, 632-633, 643-644. *Antony Life*, 502 (22); 506 (33); Chrysostom, *Matt.* LV, 6; LXIX, 4; LXVIII, 3; LXIX, 3.

177 *HR*, XXXI, 1; tr. 190. Cf. *HR*, I, 14; IX, 16; X, 8; XII, 7; XXVII, 4; XXIX, 7; XXX, 8. *Syriac Life*, 619, 632-633, 643-644; Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 360; *Nisibene Hymns*, XIII, 1; *Antony Life*, 502 (22); 506 (33); Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LV, 6; LXIX, 4; LXVIII, 3; LXIX, 3.

178 Cf. *HR*, II, 6; III, 2; V, 1; XXI, 34; XXIX, 6; XXXI, 18-21; Ephrem, *Nisibene Hymns*, XIII; XVI; *Antony Life*, 505 (30).

increased every day, and his requests for what he needed to ask from God were granted immediately. So too he possessed prophetic foreknowledge of the future and received by the grace of the all-holy Spirit power to work miracles.[180] Macedonius also received the gift of prophecy, and was able to predict certain events: *He had also received the gift of prophecy. On one occasion there came to him a general distinguished for piety - who is ignorant of the virtue of Lupicinus?*[181] *He was worried, he said, about some men who were bringing him provisions by sea from the imperial city. Fifty days had passed, he declared, since they put out from harbor, and yet he had received no word of them. Without hesitation the other replied, 'One ship,, my friend, is lost, but the other will reach the harbor of Seleucia tomorrow.' This he heard the holy tongue say, and he learnt from experience the truth of the words.*[182] Julian Saba predicted the death of the emperor Julian[183] and many other hermits predicted the future.[184]

Visions were also common in the eremitic life; for the hermits they were a means of instruction: *And he* (Symeon the Stylite) *had been in seclusion thirty eight days, in the night between the third day of the week and the fourth, in that week in which the door of the mandra was opened, at midnight suddenly there was something like lightning, and the whole cell was lighted up by it. And there appeared to him in the likeness of a youth a beautiful one clothed in white, who stood before the Blessed One between earth and heaven. And he answered and said to him, 'Fear not, but be strong and of good courage. For, lo, thy discipline is ended, thy slanderer put to shame, and thy crown prepared in heaven.' And as he talked with him, he streteched out his hand and touched him on that foot of his from which he was suffering. At once the disease fled from it, his pain ceased, his body was invigorated, his countenance grew radiant, his face shone, he recovered his speech, and that foul disagreeable odor passed away....*[185] The transparency of the hermit's soul made him vigilant; it enabled him to see by the inner eye what is unseen by the physical eye. Accordingly dreams were a medium for the transmission and perception of events.[186]

179 *2Cor.* 3, 18.

180 *HR*, I, 3; tr. 13.

181 'Lupicinus was magister equitum (commander of the cavalry) in the East from 364 to 367 (see *Prosopgraphy of the Later Empire*, I, 520). Although he was a devout Christian he was criticized by the historian Ammianus (XX, 1, 2) for arrogance, avarice, and cruelty. He was the recipient of Theodoret, *ep.* 90.', Price, *History*, 109.

182 *HR*, XIII, 15; tr. 105.

183 Cf. *HR*, II, 14.

184 Cf. *HR*, VI, 5; IX, 4; XIII, 15; XV, 4; XXI, 17; XXVI, 19.

185 *Syriac Life*, 580; tr. 157; cf. *ibid.* 509, 539, 572-3, 584, 600, 616, 623-7; *HR*, XXI, 17, 21-22; XVIII, 2.

186 Cf. *Antony Life*, 496 (10); *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Lamy), 19; *Acts of Thomas*, 1, 29.

11. HUMILITY

Humility was a quality of the hermit who rejected the sinful world: *Because they saw ostentation in the world, they made humility their love, that through their humility they might be worthy of unending exaltation.*[187] As a result of his love for Christ and his renunciation of all worldly thoughts and possessions, the hermit became humble and poor: he sought glory only from God. His humility was a result of his unity with God and a sign of his perfection in the wisdom of the Spirit.[188]

12. CONCLUSION: THE CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

The aim of the early Syrian hermit was to become a true Christian: (th Isaurians) *approached the Saint* (Symeon the Stylite) *and said to him, 'Tell us truth if thou art the servant of God.' He said to them, 'I am a Christian'.*[189] Alexander the Sleepless (Akoimetos) considered the ascetic life in the desert as the real Christian life, and anybody who wanted to become perfect in Christ should give up everything and go to the desert to be tested.[190] In fact, every hermit who went to the desert to join the eremitic life wanted to become a true disciple of his Lord Jesus Christ.[191] The study of early Syrian eremitism reveals the extent to which the whole movement was rooted in the spirituality of the church. The ascetic life was motivated by the call of Jesus Christ to become perfect Christians. For the Syrian hermit there was only one way of becoming a Christian, that which is described in the Scriptures, and it is clear that the hermits chose the most radical interpretation of Christianity. They tried literally to fulfil the words of the Scriptures.

187 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 389; tr. 477.

188 Cf. *Antony Life*, 496 (12); *Syriac Life*, 616; *Abraham Qidunaya*, (Lamy), 25-6; *HR*, XXI, 11; XXIV, 8; Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 20 (9); Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXXIII, 3; LXXII, 4; *Didache*, 3, 10; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 10, 2; *Tral.* 4, 1; *Acts of Thomas*, 37; 85-6; 94; *Didascalia*, III, 27-29; 36; IV, 53; XI, 133; XII, 143; XV, 157, 163.

189 *Syrian Life*, 513; tr. 114; cf. *ibid.* 602.

190 Stoop, *Alexander*, 18.

191 Cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph.* 9, 2; *Mag.* 4; 10; *Rom.* 3; 9, 2; 10, 2; *Didache*, 6, 2; Tatian, 31; Theophilius of Antioch, II, 33; *Acts of Thomas*, 27; *Didascalia*, V, 60-1; XI, 133-4; XIX, 188; XXI, 218; XXVI, 258.

IV. CONCLUSION

A. RULES AND FORMS

Having discussed the chief features of the life of the Syrian hermits, I will now outline the overall structure of early eremitism.

1. THE FIRST COENOBITIC COMMUNITIES

Syrian eremitism was founded by individuals who lived alone, totally independent of any coenobitic community. The existence of the hermit was strongly marked by his individuality. In its origins, Syrian eremitism did not seek to build up an organised coenobitic system. Gradually, however, th numerous disciples who wished to adopt this life forced its early masters t develop coenobitic structures to assist beginners.

a. Chalcis

According to Theodoret, the first Syrian eremitic community was located in the desert of Chalcis. It was founded by Marcianus, and counted Eusebius, Agapetus, Symeon, Sabinus and Basil among its first disciples.[1]

b. Nicerte (Apamea)

Agapetus founded two eremitic communities in the region of Apamea; one was named after him and the other after his companion Symeon.[2]

c. Teleda

Teleda was founded by Ammianus around the middle of the fourth century and it became one of the most famous eremitic centres of the Syrian Church. Among its famous ascetics were Eusebius and Symeon the Stylite. Greek was spoken along with Syriac in some parts of the Teleda community.[3]

d. Marianus' Community

This was founded in the Antiochene region but nothing is known of its history.[4]

e. Zeugma

Founded by Publius, the community of Zeugma was a mixture of Greek and Syriac speaking hermits. The liturgy and ascetic teaching were performed in both languages.[5]

1 Cf. *HR*, III, 5.
2 Cf. *HR*, III, 4.
3 Cf. *HR*, IV, 13.
4 Cf. *HR*, IV, 3.
5 Cf. *HR*, V, 4-5.

f. Cyrrhus

Symeon the Elder built two eremitic retreats on the mountains where he lived, and he trained the hermits during his lifetime.[6]

g. Skopelos

Skopelos, near Iskanderun, was the place where Theodosius founded his eremitic community; for the first time in the history of Syrian eremitism, he introduced daily manual work.[7]

h. Maronia

Maronia was a hamlet in the desert of Chalcis where Malchus joined an eremitic community whose history remains unknown.[8]

i. Lebanon

It would seem that Abraham, originally from Cyrrhus, founded an eremitic community on Mount Lebanon. It was probably located in 'Aqura near the river Adonis.[9]

j. Beroea (Aleppo)

Marana and Kyra were the two founders of an eremitic community for women in Aleppo, which was well organised and of some renown.[10]

k. Cyrrhus

Domnina founded another community for women near Cyrrhus, which also seems to have been well organised.[11]

l. The Boskoi

It is difficult to know whether the *Boskoi* (Shepherds) were a true eremitic community or merely a gathering of hermits who shared the same ideal of life. Eusebius' account of them does not help in resolving this problem.[12]

m. The Sleepless monks (Akoimetoi)

They were founded in Mesopotamia by Alexander but spread to many parts of the Syrian Orient. They reached as far as Constantinople and the Black Sea. They were the first community to organise a liturgy of continuous prayer. In fact, Alexander's biographer leaves us in a state of considerable confusion about the location of these monasteries.[13]

6 Cf. *HR*, VI, 13.
7 Cf. *HR*, X.3.
8 Cf. Jerome, *Malchus*.
9 Cf. *HR*, XVII, 2.
10 Cf. *HR*, XXIX, 2.
11 Cf. *HR*, XXX,4.
12 Cf. Sozomen, *HE*, VI, 32.
13 Cf. Stoop, *Alexander*, 51.

n. Abba Elia's Community

This was located in Mesopotamia. It is mentioned in the *Life of Alexander* but we have no clear idea regarding its structure and organisation.[14]

These communities were not the only ones in the early eremitic movement but, owing to the lack of sources, it is impossible to give a complete list of all those which existed before the middle of the fifth century.[15] We do know, however, that many monasteries were built as the result of a vow, especially during the fifth century: *Now there was a certain man in the village of Yathlaha, which was distant from Telneshe about three miles, who was a rich man and chief of the village. This man had a daughter who had been a paralytic from the time she was a child, and she had not even been able to move for about eightee years. They brought her and placed her on the north of the cell, and her fathe entered and told the Blessed One* (Symeon the Stylite) *and besought him to pra for her....* After she was healed by Symeon, *her father built her a convent, ana she dwelt in it all the days of her life.*[16]

According to several sources, there were many thousands of Syrian hermits prior to the mid-fifth century,[17] though not all of them pursued a solitary life: *The avenging spirit common to men has devised many ways of evil in his zeal to consign the whole human race to total destruction, and the nurslings of piety have devised many and differing ladders for the ascent into heaven. Some, contesting in companies--myriad are such communities, defeating enumeration--enjoy unageing crowns and attain the desired ascent; others, receiving no human consolation, enjoy in this way proclamation as victors. Some living in tents and others in cells chant hymns to God; others embrace the life in holes and caves.*[18] Theodoret, our best source of information, admits that many hermits and communities were not mentioned in his work.[19] Coenobitism attracted thousands of people who were unable to live as solitary hermits; such people seem to have been widespread in the Syrian Orient from the second half of the fourth century.[20]

14 Cf. Stoop, *Alexander*, 6-7.

15 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Ascticism* II, 159-184.

16 *Syriac Life*, 530-531; tr. 126; cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 162, comments: 'The vow played a significant role in this situation for often such people vowed to build monasteries in repaying the favors'.

17 Cf. *HR*, *Prol.* 7; II, 3, 9; III, 4, 21; IV, 9; VI, 7; XIV, 1; XXIII, 2; XXV, 2; XXVII, 1; XXX, 4-6; XXX, 1; Stoop, *Alexandre,* 26. 53; Chrysostom, *Mtt.* XXI, 5; XXXIII, 5; *Syriac Life*, 524.

18 *HR*, XXVII, 1; tr. 177.

19 Cf. *HR*, XXVII, 1.

20 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 229ff; *History of Asceticism* II, 140ff; 159ff; Canivet, *Monachisme,* 50ff; 147ff.

2. COENOBITIC HERMIT AND SOLITARY HERMIT: EXCHANGE

It was possible for a hermit to exchange his solitary life for life in a community; the decision was based mainly on his spiritual growth. Alexander the Sleepless frequently moved between the coenobitic and solitary lives.[21] Symeon the Stylite did likewise[22] and Limnaeus began his career in an eremitic community but later became an anchorite in the open air.[23] By contrast, Julian Saba,[24] Publius,[25] and Theodosius,[26] all left the solitary eremitic life for the coenobitic life. Marcianus[27] and Eusebius of Teleda[28] combined the two; they remained anchorites while continuing to lead their communities. Transitions between coenobitism and anchoretism were easily made during the initial period of Syrian eremitism.[29] Only from the time of Rabbula did the monastic structure start to become fixed: *No one shall receive a brother that moves from monastery to monastery without a word (assignment) of the rišdaira (superior) with whom he was (stayed).*[30] It became increasingly difficult for a would-be hermit to move from the anchoretic life to the coenobitic and back again: *No one of the brothers shall dwell isolatedly except he who has given proof regarding his works during a long period of time.*[31]

3. ORGANISATION

No strict rule, such as that established by Pachomius in Egypt, governed the Syrian eremitic movement. Syrian eremitism remained a movement which was directed by the individual, not by any rules. Rabbula was the first person who tried to impose regulations on the hermits but his work cannot be regarded as a genuine monastic rule.[32] He did not aim to organise the coenobitic hermits; rather, as a bishop, he wished simply to prevent certain deviations in the eremitic life. The so-called *Admonitions of Mar Ephrem Arranged According to the Alphabet*[33] do not deal with the whole structure of the eremitic movement but restrict themselves to regulating certain aspects of the behaviour of the hermits.

21 Cf. Stoop, *Alexandre*, 8-9ff.
22 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 523-525; *Antony Life*, 494-496.
23 Cf. *HR*, XXII, 2.
24 Cf. *HR*, II, 4.
25 Cf. *HR*, V, 2-3.
26 Cf. *HR*, X, 2-3.
27 Cf. *HR*, III, 4-5.
28 Cf. *HR*, IV, 3.
29 'On passe de la vie cénobitique à l'anachorèse et de l'anachorèse à la vie cénobitique, même si l'anachorèse en théorie renferme plus de perfection et répond comme on le dit, à une tendance profonde du monaschisme syrien', Canivet, *Monachisme*, 208.
30 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 33 (26).
31 Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 31 (18).
32 Cf. Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 27-33.
33 Cf. Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 19-23.

Some idea of the general rules governing the eremitism can be gleaned from a summary of daily life:

--Early in the morning, *at the crowing of the cock the President comes, and gently touching the sleeper with his foot, rouses them all. For there are none sleepig naked.*[34]

--Then as soon as they have arisen they stand up, and sing the prophetic hymns with much harmony, and well composed tunes....[35]

--And when day is coming on (around 6 a.m.) *they take rest again,*[36] *-- a short break before reading Scripture and manual work.*

--Having performed their morning prayers and hymns, they proceed to the reading of the Scriptures. There are some too that have learned to write o books, each having his own apartment assigned to him, where he lives perpetual quiet; no one is trifling, not one speaks a word.[37]

According to Chrysostom, four things took place between sunrise and sunset the reading of the Scriptures, manual work, daily prayer, and brotherly discussion based on spiritual reading and experiences.[38] Reading and discussion were closely linked.

--The hermits' day consisted of continual prayer interspersed with work.[39]

--At sunset they took their only meal of the day.

--Afterwards, they performed the evening prayer.[40]

--Finally, they started their night of vigil and sleep.

This was, generally speaking, the pattern which nearly all coenobitic Syrian hermits followed in their daily lives. The life of an anchorite differed only slightly; the day was still based on continual prayer interspersed with manual work.[41]

The hierarchy in the monastery was headed by the superior whose function was to lead his community in everything.[42] The superior was surrounded by a

34 Chrysostom, *Tim.* XIV, tr. 456; *Mt.* LXVIII, 3.
35 Chrysostom, *Tim.* XIV, tr. 456.
36 Chrysostom, *Tim.* XIV, tr.457.
37 Chrysostom, *Tim.* XIV, tr.457.
38 Cf. Chrysostom, *Tim.* XIV; *Mt.* LXVIII, 4.
39 Cf. Chrysostom, *Tim.* XIV; Theodoret, *HR*, X, 3.
40 Cf. Chrysostom, *Tim.* XIV.
41 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 513-525; *Antony Life*, 493 (3)-494 (6); Jerome, *Malchus*, 317 (7); *HR*, IV, 2; X, 3; XXVI, 26.
42 For the term 'superior' and its place in Theodoret's Greek works, cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 227-228. In Syriac, the word used for the monastic superior is *riš-dairā*, literally, 'the head of the convent'; cf. *Syriac Life*, 518, 524; Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 13, 21, 24. The *rišdaira* held complete authority in the monastery.

council of hermits who assisted him with the administration of the monastery; it is not possible to describe the precise function of this advisory body.[43] Alexander the Sleepless (Akoimetos) appointed an abbot for every monastery he founded, and the abbot was the real head of the monastery in all aspects, spiritual and material.[44]

4. DAYRA

Dayra is the Syriac word often used to refer to the habitation of a coenobitic community: its meaning is simply *a dwelling*.[45] Eventually, this word was used exclusively to refer to the monastery. The monks were someties called *ahe dayraye* (the brethren of the monastery), or simply, *the dayraye*, literally, 'the dwellers'.[46] These names describe an independent monastic institution and, as such, were used only from the mid-fifth century when the eremitic movement became a fixed institution within the Syrian Church. We have no sources dating from before the late fifth century that describe the architecture of the *Dayra*. In view of the hermits' poverty, one may assume that their buildings were very simple.

B. THE CONTEMPORARY ASCETIC MOVEMENTS

It will be clear from this work that Syrian asceticism before the middle of the fifth century was deeply individualistic in character. It was given shape by individual Syrian ascetics who developed a wide variety of ascetic practices and lifestyles. The existence of such variety, and the personal nature of the search for God which fostered it, centered as it was in the life of *ihidayutha*, confirms the native Syrian origin of the tradition. Equally, it confirms the falsity of the famous Egyptian claim on the origins of Syrian eremitism, embodied in the legend of Mar Awgen.[47] Jacob of Nisibis, who was not the first Syrian hermit

43 'La succession à la tête des couvents ne paraît pas, dans la Philothée, réglée par voie élective, mails il semble que le supérieur désigne celui qui doit le remplacer et qui souvent lui était associé dans le gouvernement.... La communauté pouvait être dotée d'un conseil, à moins que les moines n'aient occupé une place selon l'ancienneté d'âge ou d'entrée au monastère, sorte de relique de la hiérarchie de l'Eglise d'Antioche, par exemple, où Flavien et Diodore avaient tenu la 'seconde chaire'; ainsi, dans le monastère où vivait Sabinos, il y avait un higoumène....', Canivet, *Monachisme*, 230.

44 Cf Stoop, *Alexander*. 25. 30. 31. 43.

45 Cf. *Abraham Qidunaya*, IV, 22; *Julian Saba*, V, 3; VI, 21; XIV, 6; XVI, 6; XVIII, 8; XXII, 6; XXIII, 1; XXIV, 8.

46 This word was used by Rabbula in his *Admonitions for the Coenobitic Hermits (Dairaye)*, translated by Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 27ff.; *Admonitions for the Monks*. Rabbula, however, called some of the hermits *dayraye* because they lived a coenobitic life.

47 All modern scholars of the subject reject the idea of an Egyptian origin: cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 145; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 219; Guillaumont, *Origines*, 217; Shiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 180; Backer, 'Syriac', 342-343; Connolly, 'Rules', 153, 159-162; Leroux,

despite being the first named in the early Syrian sources, embarked upon his eremitic life at the same time as Antony. Yet there is no connection whatsoever between the two. The Syrian eremitic sources never once allude to the Egyptian origin of the Syrian movement; it is always treated as an independent movement originating in the Syrian Church's own tradition of biblical spirituality. In view of its diversity and freedom, one assumes that Syrian eremitism was originally founded in the same way as it was later nourished--by the endeavours of many individual hermits. Unfortunately, this assumption must remain in the realm of speculation because, before Jacob of Nisibis, we know nothing about Syrian Christian hermits. Some researchers believe that Syrian eremitism derived originally from the Essenes, an idea based on the hypothesis that the Essen were present in Mesopotamia and Syria after 70 AD.[48]

Burkitt and Vööbus argue that Christian Syrian monasticism stemmed fr Manichaeism, influenced by Syrian gnostic ascetic movements such as those Marcion and Valentinus.[49] The only primary source for Manichaeism, however, is the *Cologne Mani Codex* of the late fourth or early fifth century, which throws no direct light on these claims. Whatever the value of this research in the long run, for the moment it remains necessarily speculative, as no direct evidence can be adduced for the link between Syrian Christian asceticism and other contemporary ascetic movements in the Near East. One should not ignore the possibility that there may have been influences from non-Christian ascetic movements, nor, however, should one be unduly influenced by the idea. In reality, the whole question is shrouded in darkness and the sparsity of historical sources should not encourage one to be over-adventurous in the search for an answer.

'Monachisme', 179; Brock, 'Asceticism', 3, 11; Price, *History*, xviii-xx. The story of Mar Awgin is a compilation of the seventh century, perhaps later: 'The second example concerns the standard later Syriac tradition concerning the origins of monasticism in Syria and Mesopotamia. According to this tradition monasticism was brought to Mesopotamia by the Egyptian monk Mar Awgen (Eugenios), with his seventy disciples. In the cycle of lives of Mar Awgen and his disciples we have detailed accounts of how Egyptian style monasticism was implanted in Mesopotamia in the fourth century. On closer examination, however, these traditions turn out to be unattested before the early Arab period, and the Lives themselves lack any really reliable historical data (although they are rich in local geographical information)', Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 108. Cf. Fiey, 'Aones, Awgen'; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 217-220.

48 Cf. Daniélou, *Les Manuscrits de la Mer Morte et les Origines du Christianisme*, 86; Van den Ploeg, 'Les Esséniens et les origines du monachisme chretien', 321-339.

49 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 45-61, 109-137, 158-169; Burkitt, 'Syriac-Speaking Christianity', 499, 502.

C. THE PRE-CHRISTIAN MESOPOTAMIAN ASCETICISM[50]

The aim of the discussion that follows is to show that asceticism existed in Mesopotamia a long time before Christianity and then to establish the importance of the pre-Christian tradition for the study of asceticism in the Syrian Orient in general. In view of the vastness of this field of research, I propose to confine my account to three documents: the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the consecrated life of the *Naditus*, and the *Shirkutus*.

1. THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is the longest and greatest literary composition written in cuneiform Akkadian.[51] Its central character is Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk, who probably lived sometime between 2800 and 2500 B.C. Much of the subject matter of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is not covered by the earlier, Sumerian stories; especially those episodes in which lustful behaviour is criticised and the hero wanders alone, rejecting comfort, friends, and any kind of kinship. Yet, all these concepts, central to the epic's ascetic theme, are present in the fragmentary Old Babylonian version, first composed in the Old Babylonian period (1800-1600 B.C.). The version of the poem now referred to as 'Standard' would appear to have been set down as late as the the 8th century B.C., though it could well date from a few centuries earlier.

The story of Gilgamesh was popular all over the ancient Near East. Texts appeared in Hurrian and Hittite, while some of its themes have been discovered in the *Alexander Romance*.[52] Themes and characters from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* have been found in the *Book of the Giants* at Qumran. The story of Gilgamesh was transmitted through the Arab oral tradition until it eventually formed the story of Buluqia in the book of *1001 Nights*.[53] The latest research on the subject would suggest that Gilgamesh themes made up a part of the Manichaean Canon.[54] These facts confirm the survival of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and its adaptation by both Semites and Greeks for their different cultural backgrounds. Although there is no proof that the earliest Syrian ascetics knew the story of Gilgamesh, therefore, it may be important to point out some similarities between the famous Akkadian epic and the lives of the early Syrian hermits:

50 I would like to thank Dr. Stephanie Dalley for her help in writing this section.

51 Cf. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 39.

52 Cf. Dalley, 'Gilgamesh in the Arabian Nights', 1.

53 For the historical continuity of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* in the Aramaic, Greek, and Arab traditions cf. Dalley, 'Gilgamesh', 2-17, and her new article: 'The Gilgamesh epic and Manichaean themes', *Aram*, vol.3 (1991).

54 See Dalley, 'Gilgamesh', 16.

a. The search for fame and eternal life.

Gilgamesh (was) named from birth for fame. Two-thirds of him was divine, and one-third mortal.[55] Gilgamesh believed that the only way to achieve fame and alleviate boredom was to succeed in exterminating Humbaba.[56] Humbaba represented the Evil One and he dwelt in the mountains--the uninhabited land. With the help of Enkidu, his companion, Gilgamesh fought ferociously against Humbaba, finally slaying him in his remote mountain lair.[57] After his great feat:

he washed his filthy hair, he cleaned his gear,

Shook out his locks over his back,

Threw away his dirty clothes and put on fresh ones.

He clothed himself in robes and tied on a sash.

Gilgamesh put his crown on his head...[58]

Later, however, Gilgamesh was so deeply shocked and upset by the death of Enkidu that he transformed his search for fame into a search for eternal life. He wanted to overcome death, the dreadful end of life. He had to cross the land of darkness[59] and the sea[60] in his search for *the secret of the gods*. That secret was the flood[61] which had been ordained to *punish the sinner for his sin, punish the criminal for his crime*.[62] Gilgamesh finally failed in his quest for eternal life when the gods refused to grant it to him.

In early Syrian theology the desert and the mountains (or the 'uninhabited area') were often considered the refuge of sinners.[63] The early Syrian hermits might well have been motivated by this theme in the story of Gilgamesh when they went out into the wilderness to combat the Evil One in the form of their own sins and the sins of the world. Just as Gilgamesh was afraid of death[64] and struggled to attain eternal life, so the Syrian hermit was tormented by his sins, which to him were synonymous with death, and he spent his life in the quest to reach the harbour of salvation and eternal life. Whatever the state of the hermit's soul, it is clear that, for him, as for Gilgamesh, there was only one enemy, the

55 *Gilgamesh*, I, ii, p. 51; IX, ii, p. 96; I refer to Dalley's English translation in *Myths from Mesopotamia*.
56 *Gilgamesh*, III, iii, pp. 64-65.
57 *Gilgamesh*, IV-VI.
58 *Gilgamesh*, VI, i, p. 77.
59 *Gilgamesh*, IX, iii - v, pp. 97-98.
60 *Gilgamesh*, X.
61 *Gilgamesh*, XI, i, p.,109.
62 *Gilgamesh*, XI, iv, p.115.
63 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 87; *Didascalia*, XXVI, 241, 257; Theophilus of Antioch, II, 14.
64 *Gilgamesh*, X, ii, p. 101, iii, p. 104, v, p. 106, vi, p. 108.

Evil One. His mission was to fight that enemy until he triumphed and received the crown of glory.

b. Sufferings and the struggle

The story of that man, Gilgamesh, who went through all kinds of sufferings.
He was superior to other kings, a warrior Lord of great stature,
A hero born of Uruk, a goring wild bull.
He marches at the front as leader,
He goes behind, the support of his brothers,
A strong net, the protection of his men,
The raging flood-wave, which can destroy even a stone wall.
Son of Lugalbanda, Gilgamesh, perfect in strength,
Son of the lofty cow, the wild cow Ninsun.
He is Gilgamesh, perfect in splendour,
Who opened up passes in the mountains,
Who could dig pits even in the mountainside,
Who crossed the ocean, the broad seas, as far as the sunrise.
Who inspected the edges of the world, kept searching for eternal life.
Who reached Ut-napishtim the far-distant, by force.
Who restored to their rightful place cult centres (?) which the Flood had ruined.
There is nobody among the kings of teeming humanity
Who can compare with him,
Who can say 'I am King' beside Gilgamesh.[65]

His struggle and sufferings to acquire eternal life require that he and his people give up all kinds of possessions:

Man of Shuruppak, son of Ubara-Tutu,
Dismantle your house, build a boat.
Leave possessions, search out living things.
Reject chattels and save lives![66]

Struggling and suffering had to be endured on the eremitic route to salvation.[67] A hermit was called *a soldier*, *a warrior*, or *an athlete* because he

65 *Gilgamesh*, I, i, p. 51; cf. also, I, iv; III, i-ii; V, vi; VII, vi, p. 90; VIII, i, p. 91; X, ii-v.
66 *Gilgamesh*, XI, i, p. 110.
67 Cf. *Syriac Life*, 529, 536; John the Solitary, *On Stillness*, 463-464; Ephrem, *On Solitaries*,

was prepared to fight against all difficulties to win the battle against sin for Christ's sake.[68] The Syrian Christian hermit also had to be poor, destitute, and free from all earthly possessions, in order to be completely empty and ready to receive the true life from God.[69]

c. Wandering and the stranger

Wandering in the wilderness is part of Gilgamesh's search for fame and eternal life;[70] in the poem, the wanderer in search of adventure becomes a *stranger* to the people of the inhabited land.[71] The Shepherds *(Boskoi)* were hermits from the Syrian Orient who lived in the mountains, roaming nomadically.[72] In the early history of Syrian eremitism, hermits whose way of life was similar to that of the Shepherds were numerous.[73] On account of the ascetic calling, these men also became *strangers* to the world.[74]

d. Wild life and vegetarian food

Aruru washed her hands, pinched off a piece of clay,
cast it out into open country.
She created a [primitive man], Enkidu the warrior
offspring of silence (?) sky-bolt of Ninurta.
His whole body was shaggy with hair, he was
furnished with tresses like a woman,
His locks of hair grew luxuriant like grain.
He knew neither people nor country; he was
dressed as cattle are.
With gazelles he eats vegetation,
With cattle he quenches his thirst at the watering place.
With wild beasts he satisfies his need for water....
He walks about on the mountain all the time,
All the time he eats vegetation with cattle...[75]

417-421; Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXVIII, 3; *Liber Graduum*, 908,18-19.

68 Chrysostom, *Mtt.* LXIX,3-LXX; *HR, Prol.* 6; XXVI, 1.

69 Cf. Ephrem, *Sermones*, IV, 58-137; Chrysostom, *Stat.* XVII, 5; *HR*, III, 2, XII, 1.7; VIII, 1; Jerome, *Malchus*, 315-316; *Syriac Life*, 516-517. Cf. Poverty, pp. 201-203.

70 *Gilgamesh*, I,i, p.51; I,iii, p.55; I,iv, p.56; III,i, p.64; III,ii, p.65; IV,i, p.67; Iv,ii, p.69; V,vi, p.70; VII,iv, p.89; IX,i, p.95; X,v, p.98; X,ii, p.101-102; X,iii, p.104; X,iv-v, pp.106-107.

71 *Gilgamesh*, XII,i-ii, p.121.

72 Cf. the Shepherds in this work p. 378.

73 Cf. Wandering in this work pp. 194-195.

74 Cf. Stranger in this work 195-196.

75 *Gilgamesh*, I,ii, pp.52-53; cf. also I,iv, p.56; II,ii, p.60; VIII,i, p.91; X,v, p.106.

The wild life of Enkidu, who lived with the beasts, who drank and ate like them,[76] allowing his long hair to hang loosely,[77] is very similar to the life led by the early Syrian hermits.[78] while later, the Syrian hermits were also dirty because of their wild life.[79] It is also worth mentioning that both Enkidu and Gilgamesh wear animal skins like the Christian hermits--Endiku before he reaches Uruk, Gilgamesh after Enkidu's death.[80]

e. Sleep and Vigil.

Gilgamesh did not sleep by day or night;[81] when he needed rest

he sat with his chin on his knees.

Sleep, which spills out over people, overcame him.

In the middle watch he finished his sleep....[82]

Seeing his hard toils of travelling, vigil and struggle for life,

his face was like that of a long-distance traveller.[83]

Gilgamesh's hard life is well reflected in the lives of the Syrian hermits. They too spent their time struggling against sleep, trying to keep a constant vigil. For a clear example of this, one may recall, amongst others, the *Akoimetoi* or Sleepless monks.[84]

f. Eve and the search for eternal life

An Eve-like figure is the main stumbling-block on the path to eternal life in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. She appears in the person of Shamhat who tries to seduce Enkidu away from his primitive life with her beauty:

When he (Enkidu) *approaches the cattle at the watering place,*

She (the harlot Shamhat) *must take off her clothes*

and reveal her attractions.

He will see her and go close to her.

Then his cattle, who have grown up in open

country with him, will become alien to him.[85]

76 *Gilgameh*, I, iv, p. 55.
77 *Gilgamesh*, II, iv, p. 61.
78 Cf. in this work: Food pp 245-253, Nature and Animals pp , 261-262.
79 Chrysostom, *Priest.* VI,5; Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 85-89; *Syriac Life*, 618; *HR*, VI, 2; cf. in this work Hygiene pp 257-260.
80 Cf. Clothes in this work pp. 254-255.
81 *Gilgamesh*, I,v, p.57; cf. also X,v, p.107; vi, p. 108.
82 *Gilgamesh*, IV,i-iii, pp.67-69.
83 *Gilgamesh*, X,i-ii, pp.99-101.
84 Cf. Vigil in this work pp. 253-254.
85 *Gilgamesh*, I,iii, p.54.

Shamhat succeeded in seducing Enkidu:[86] *for six days and seven nights Enkidu was aroused and poured himself into Shamhat.*[87] After these events, Enkidu's primitive life becomes alien to him and his powers diminish greatly.[88] In the poem, Shamhat is an ally of Humbaba and so a force for evil. Similarly, after the defeat of Humbaba, another Eve, Ishtar, lusts after the handsome and powerful Gilgamesh.[89] Gilgamesh rejects Ishtar who asks her father, Anu, to dispatch the Bull of Heaven to strike Gilgamesh down.[90] The battle between them ends in victory for Gilgamesh. Enraged,

Ishtar *gathered the crimped courtesans, prostitutes and harlots.*
She arranged for weeping over the Bull of Heaven's shoulder.[91]

After the Bull's death, there is a meeting of the gods:

As they (Gilgamesh and Enkidu) *have slain the Bull of Heaven,*
So too they have slain Huwawa, who [guarded]
the mountains planted with pines.
And Anu said, 'One of them [must die].'
Ellil replied: 'Let Enkidu die, but let Gilgamesh not die'.[92]

Enkidu's death, therefore, is caused by the harlot Shamhat who diminished his power and drew him out of his primitive life. That is why Enkidu curses Shamhat before his death.[93] He blesses her after Shamash's intervention[94] but that does not change Shamhat's role in his corruption. For the hermits of the Syrian Orient, women played a similar role to that of Shamhat and Ishtar in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Hermits were allowed no contact with women in case Eve diverted their minds from the ascetic life and its practices.[95]

g. Gilgamesh and the Acts of Thomas

For the present purpose, the most striking parallel is that between the first chapter of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the first part of the *Acts of Thomas*. Just as Enkidu entered the city and found a feast, with songs and beautiful girls, so Judas Thomas disembarked to find the same scene.[96] Further, as the harlot Shamhat looked at Enkidu lustfully, so the flute-girl looked at Judas Thomas to

86 *Gilgamesh*, I, iii-v pp.54-57.
87 *Gilgamesh*, I,iv, p.55.
88 *Gilgamesh*, I,iv-v, pp.56-57.
89 *Gilgameh*, VI,i-iii, pp.77-80.
90 *Gilgamesh*, VI,iii-iv, pp.80-81.
91 *Gilgamesh*, VII,v, p.82.
92 *Gilgamesh*, VII,i, pp.83-84.
93 *Gilgamesh*, VII,iii, p.87.
94 *Gilgamesh*, VII,iv p.88.
95 Cf. *HR*, I,4; II,17; III, 14.22; VIII,13; XXI,25; XXIX, 3; *Antony Life*, 14; *Syriac Life*, 537.
96 Cf. *Gilgamesh*, I,v, p.57; *Acts of Thomas*, 4.

seduce him.[97] Similarly, Gilgamesh rejected the Ishtar's desire,[98] while Judas Thomas rejected all kinds of adultery and fornication.[99] Some important similarities may also be observed between the last two chapters of the Epic of Gilgamesh and the *Hymn of the Pearl* in the *Acts of Thomas*. I would argue that the *pearl* in the *Acts of Thomas*[100] replaces the *plant* in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*;[101] the snake snatched away *the plant* from the sight of Gilgamesh, just as a snake hid away the *pearl* from Judas Thomas.[102] A final point: after his victory over Humbaba, Gilgamesh throws away his dirty garment, washes himself, and puts on a new robe;[103] similarly, after his victory over the snake, Judas Thomas throws away his filthy and unclean dress,[104] returning to his father to be adorned with a glorious robe.[105]

2. THE NADITUS

The *naditus* were groups of women dedicated to different Mesopotamian gods such as Marduk in Babylon, Ninurta in Nippur, Zababa in Kish, and Shamash in Sippar. Our best information concerns the women of the northern Babylonian city of Sippar, who were dedicated to the sun-god, Shamash, and I will limit my discussion to them. The *naditus* of Sippar were housed in a walled area within the temple of Shamash called the *gagum*, 'The Locked House'. Records of this institution appear in the Old Babylonian period from c. 1880 - 1550 BC.[106] The *naditu* institution was a wealthy establishment. It received royal patronage because some princesses became *naditus* of Shamash. Girls who wished to become *naditus* were initiated at the age of 15 and the rite of initiation was performed during the first three days of the tenth month of the year (Tebet: December - January). The *naditu*'s family gave a dowry to the cloister to assist with its expenses and in this way every *naditu* supported her own life within the community. The *naditu*'s consecration was for the whole of her life, during which she was not normally allowed to leave the cloister. The *naditus* also had to keep her virginity intact, though some of them were allowed to adopt orphans. Despite this, the *naditus* of Marduk were allowed to marry and even to live in Sippar. According to the Laws of Hammurapi, the marriage of the *naditus* of Marduk was merely a social and economic arrangement. The *naditu*'s husband contributed to her expenses in the cloister while, at the same time, keeping a

97 *Gilgamesh*, I,v, p.57; cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 5-7.
98 Cf. above.
99 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 12, 13, 31, 32, 43, 51, 52, 55, 56, 61, 79, 84, 96, 102, 117, 124.
100 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 108 (12ff.).
101 *Gilgamesh*, XI,vi, p.118-119.
102 *Gilgamesh*, XI,vi, p.118-119; *Acts of Thomas*, 108 (21).
103 *Gilgamesh*, V,i, p.71; XI,iii, pp.117-118.
104 Cf. *Acts of Thomas*, 111 (62).
105 CF. *Acts of Thomas*, 111(61), 112(82).
106 Cf. Jeyes, 'The Naditu women of Sippar', 260.

second wife who acted both as a child bearer to him and a servant to his *naditu* wife.

The cloister was quite autonomous and self-contained, though there is no evidence that a mother superior of any sort was appointed. The cloister came under the authority of the temple and normally housed between 100 and 200 *naditus*. 'The reasons behind establishing an institution like the cloister in Sippar are religious as well as social. Undoubtedly it was regarded as an act of worship by a well-established family to consecrate a female member to an important cult centre like the Shamash temple in Sippar. Thereby the family ensured a close link with the deity and his consort to whom the *naditu* would pray and giv offerings on behalf of living as well as dead family members.'[107]

3. THE SHIRKUTU

'The *shirkutu* of the Old Babylonian period was an order of male and female persons who had been dedicated to various Babylonian deities, viz. Marduk, Nabu, Bel, Shamash, Nergal and Ishtar. The order was recruited in different ways. Parents dedicated their children, and princes and civilians their slaves. Slaves dedicated to the *shirkutu* could remain in their master's house until the latter's death.... No doubt the supreme motive which led to the dedication of individuals to the *shirkutu* was a desire to secure the favour of the gods.... The primary function of the *shirkutu* was to perform various subordinate duties connected with the routine of temple activities.... The *shirkutu* had more in common with the *Nethinim*, mentioned in *Chronicles, Ezra* and *Nehemia*, and the levites as described in the priestly document. The *Nethinim* although traced back to Moses, Joshua and David,[108] assumed prominence as temple servants in connection with the return of the Jews from their exile in Babylonia which may be regarded as significant. They accompanied both Zerubbabel and Ezra to Palestine and were among the first to dwell in the cities of the land of Judah after its resettlement....'[109]

D. SUMMARY

1. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, the origins of Syrian Christian asceticism are still obscure. I do not aim to offer any complete solution to the remaining problems; I merely hope to shed some new light on them and to assist in the search for a satisfactory answer. It cannot be doubted that the seeds of asceticism existed in the Syrian Orient long before Christianity. The examples of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *naditus*, and the *shirkutus* clearly substantiate that claim. Though there is no evidence of a direct link between pre- and

107 Cf. Jeyes, 'The Naditu women of Sippar', 272; for more details see Harris, *Ancient Sippar*.
108 Cf. *Num*, 31, 30; 47; *Josh*, 9, 37; *Ezra*, 8, 20.
109 Cf. Dougherty, *The Shirkutu of Babylonian Deities*, 88ff.

post-Christian asceticism in the area, it is difficult to dispute the possibility of some continuity between the two traditions. The early Christian ascetics in the Syrian Orient may be thought to reflect the ascetic tradition and spirit of their society; they were the successors of the pre-Christian ascetics, reinterpreting native practices in the context provided by their Christian faith. On account of the many points common to the two traditions, one must assume a continuity of ascetic spirit before and after the coming of Christianity.

2. The absence of any rule to govern and organise the early Syrian eremitic life should convince one that the earliest Syrian hermits shaped their ascetic spirituality according to the spirituality of the Syrian Church. They had no wish to form an independent spirituality different from that of their fellow Christians; rather, they aimed to fulfil the spiritual aims of the church through celibacy and seclusion. Thus, we cannot call them *monks*[110] because they did not form a *monastic community* which could be compared with that of Pachomius or indeed with any other monastic institution. A monastic community has its own rules, its own independent organisation within the church, and even its own spirituality.

3. Unlike in Egyptian and in later Christian monasticism, the early Syrian hermits did not acknowledge two kinds of spirituality--one for the hermits and one for ordinary Christians. They recognised only a single Christian spirituality which could be fulfilled in different ways and in different forms of life. One of those ways was the life of *iḥidayutha*. As a life of unity with God, *iḥidayutha* might be regarded as the spiritual aim of every Christian. The way this life was practised by the Syrian hermits was only one way among many. The choice of a path to salvation and fulfilment depended entirely on the life of the Spirit in the believers and His work in them.

4. Before the middle of the fifth century, Syrian eremitism had a completely individualistic basis. The hermits were called the *single ones* or the *iḥidaye* because they sought only the life of *singleness*, of *iḥidayutha*, with God through celibacy and seclusion. They were also known as the *heroes*[111] of Christian society, in contrast with the heroes of Greek pagan society, and were considered the *martyrs* of the new age of *peace* under Constantine. It is right to suppose that the men upon whom such titles were bestowed effected some kind of reform within their society. They did so by teaching Christians to seek martyrdom through the complete renunciation of the world and to become heroes through their love of God and of their neighbour. The Syrian hermits brought to their

110 The word 'monk' is defined as follows: 'A member of a community or brotherhood of men living apart from the world under the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, according to a rule (characteristic of the particular order) and devoted chiefly to the performance of religious duties and the contemplative life', *Oxford Dict.* 1837.

111 Cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 256-257.

society a radical understanding of Christian discipleship of Christ: no one could be a perfect disciple if he were not perfectly pure in God. The school of seclusion, therefore, was a life of training for the perfect purity in God which allowed the hermit to become a perfect disciple of Christ. The search for purity with God is thus a return, through Jesus Christ, to the life of Adam and Eve before the Fall.

5. Asceticism[112] consisting of strict self-mortification, effected by abstaining from sin and worldly comfort, provides the best description of the lives and practices of the Syrian hermits. The followers of eremitism can be divided into three major groups and periods:

First, the whole Syrian church seems to have been deeply affected by the eremitic way of life. The introduction to the present work shows how deeply the Syrian Christian people were concerned with asceticism. Second, the *Covenanters* or the *Bnay* and the *Bnat Oyama* took the ascetic life a stage further, committing themselves to a more rigorous self-denial. In particular, this was expressed in their abstention from sinful marriage and corrupt sexuality. Third, the Syrian hermits, who pushed Syrian asceticism to its utmost limits. They shaped a radical asceticism, available not to every Christian but only to a few individuals. And yet, the forms of Syrian eremitism described in the present work did not persist for long. From the second half of the fifth century, Syrian eremitism was forced to modify its harsh practices and adopt a more moderate monasticism influenced by Egyptian monastic life and practice. To this day, however, Syrian asceticism has two categories: the ordinary lay Christians who pursue the ascetic life prescribed by their church on an individual basis; and the *monks and nuns* who lead an organized monastic life, shaped, generally speaking, according to Eastern Christian monasticism. The stylites and open-air ascetics are completely absent from the modern history of the church, a situation

112 Zökler, 'Asceticism', 73 defines the word as follows: 'The word 'asceticism' (means in Greek, 'to exercise or practise'), when used in the sphere of religion and ethics, denotes self-preparation for a virtuous course of conduct, the zealous practise of acts of devotion and morality. This practise of virtue in the narrower and stricter sense, or what be called moral gymnastic, may consist in exercises of an inward kind (prayer offered in the heart, examination of conscience, and the like), or in acts of self-discipline passing over into the outward life (self-mortification by fasting, voluntary poverty, sexual continence, etc.). Both forms of asceticism, that pertaining to the spiritual sphere and that of a physical and external character, were already known to classical antiquity, especially in the traditional teaching of its philosophers from Pythagoras and Socrates downwards...' The *Oxford Dictionary*, 121, defines the word 'Ascetic' as: 'a monk or hermit... of or pertaining to the Ascetics, or to the exercise of extremely rigorous self-discipline; severely abstinent, austere. One of those who in the early church retired into solitude, to exercise themselves in meditation and prayer, and in the practice of rigorous self-discipline, celibacy, fasting, and toil. One who is extremely rigorous in the practice of self-denial, whether by seclusion or by abstinence from creature comforts'.

which has prevailed since the beginning of the Middle Ages. Today, very few recluses still follow the eremitic path or practise the radical way of life developed by the early Syrian hermits--the service of God through the life of seclusion.

APPENDIX:

WHO ARE THEY?

NAMES AND DIFFERENT EREMITIC WAYS OF LIFE

Hermits came from different social levels. Some were rich, some poor; some were illiterate, some highly cultivated; some came from aristocratic families, while many others were peasants; some had been important civil personalities, others slaves. Eremitism recruited its followers from all classes of society and was ready to provide inspiration for anyone seeking a life of radical spirituality.

A. RECLUSES

Recluses were ascetics whose severity of life isolated them completely from human society. They lived in caves or in very primitive cells. This radical asceticism was the oldest amongst all the Syrian ascetic schools; it became widespread and was practised by thousands of people through the centuries.

1. JACOB (JAMES) OF NISIBIS

Jacob of Nisibis is the first recluse mentioned in the writings on the history of asceticism in the Syrian Church. Our main documents for his life are contained in the *Historia Religiosa* of Theodoret of Cyrrhus[1] and the *Carmina Nisibena* of St Ephrem.[2] Certain earlier sources also mention Jacob but they are not relevant for this work.[3] Comparison between Theodoret's and Ephrem's information on Jacob seems to confirm that Theodoret is not an accurate source. He does little more than retell the popular version of Jacob's story, which is full of untrustworthy legends.[4] Theodoret completed Jacob's biography over a century after the Saint's death.[5] By contrast, Ephrem claims to have been one of Jacob's disciples: *And I the sinner who have striven to be the disciple of these three* (Jacob-Babu-Vologes, three bishops of Nisibis).[6] His text, however, is very brief and lacking in detail. Despite his untrustworthiness, therefore, Theodoret remains an important source of information about Jacob.

1 *HR*, I; tr. 12-20.

2 Ephrem, *Carmina Nisibena*, 13-16. I use Beck's edition of the Syriac and Stopford's translation, *NPNF*, XIII.

3 Jacob of Nisibis appears in the Acts of the Synod at Nicea in 325; he is also mentioned in the ancient martyrology of 411 A.D. St Jerome (420 A.D.) wrote a few words about him. Many later works refer to him, e.g., the *Chronicle of Edessa*; Gennadius, *De viris illustribus*; Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*; and the *Liber chalipharium*. Cf. Peeters, 'La légende de S. Jacques', 285-288, and Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 141-142.

4 Peeters, 'La légende', 291; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 12; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 104-108; Leroy-Molinghen, 'Un imbroglio', 126-135; Price, *History*, 21.

5 Jacob died in 338, while Theodoret's *Historia Religiosa* dates from about 444.

6 Ephrem, *Carmina Nisibena*, 14, 25; tr. 183. Ephrem composed this hymn about 358, see Vööbus: *History of Asceticism* I, 143.

Jacob was from *Nisibis, a city on the frontier of the Roman and Persian empires which in Jacob's time belonged to the Romans.*[7] The dates of Jacob's birth and of his first entry into the ascetic life are unknown. There is no record of how Jacob started his ascetic life, the identity of his spiritual master, or the school in which he received his ascetic training. Although he was the first hermit to be mentioned in the annals of Syrian eremitism, Jacob was certainly not the first recluse of this Church.[8] There is much evidence to suggest that recluses existed before him in the Syrian Church.[9] Theodoret normally identifies th founders of the various Syrian ascetic schools but he never ranks Jacob amo them. Nor does Ephrem or any other source before Theodoret. It is assumed tl Jacob started his eremitic life in the region of Nisibis sometime during th second half of the third century.[10] According to Theodoret, Jacob led a life of open-air asceticism during spring, summer, and autumn and withdrew into a cave during winter: *Originating from this city the great James embraced the eremitical and quiet life, and gaining the tops of the highest hills lived upon them. In spring, summer, and autumn he used the thickets, with the sky for roof; in the winter season a cave received him and provided scanty shelter.*[11]

Around 300 A.D. Jacob became bishop of Nisibis. Ephrem states that when he rose to the bishopric he was still young: *He became Head in his youth, when they made him preacher to the people.*[12] Jacob was, according to his biographers, an excellent pastor and a famous leader of the Church of Nisibis. He died during 337/338[13] and was buried within the walls of Nisibis to protect its population from evil attacks: *Be ye wise like Nisibis, O ye daughters of Nisibis,--for that she laid the body within her, and it became a wall without her. --Place ye within you the living body, that it be a wall for your lives.*[14] Theodoret relates that after the peace treaty of 363, when Nisibis was handed over to the Persians, the population of the city departed, taking with them the body of Jacob: *After time had passed and this town was handed over by the then-emperor to the kingdom of Persia, all the inhabitants of the city departed, but took with them the body of their champion, aggrieved and bewailing their exile, but chanting the power of their victorious hero; for if he had survived they would not have come under barbarians.*[15] Although Ephrem and others

7 *HR*, I, 2.
8 Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 143.
9 Cf. further details later in this work, pp 308-309.
10 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 143.
11 *HR*, I, 2; tr. 13.
12 Ephrem, *Carmina Nisibena*, 15, 7; tr. 184.
13 These dates are given in *The Chronicle of Edessa*: cf. *Chronique d'Edesse*, CSCO, 2, 4.
14 Ephrem, *Carmina Nisibena*, 13, 21; tr. 181.
15 *HR*, I, 14; tr. 20; cf. Canivet, *Histoire* I, 192. For more details on Jacob's life cf. Peeters, 'La légende de S. Jacques', 285-373; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 141-143; Canivet,

followed his spiritual guidance during the period of his episcopate, it is not known whether Jacob of Nisibis had disciples who imitated his reclusive life.

2. JULIAN SABA

The main sources of information about Julian Saba's life are two documents, one in Syriac and one in Greek. The Syriac text is ascribed to St Ephrem, though it is probably not by him.[16] In any case, it does not contain sufficient information for the present purpose. It is mainly concerned with Julian's spiritual presence and does not adequately describe his ascetic life or detail his activities. The Greek text, written by Theodoret, is more relevant. It contains a clear, biographical account and is an important historical source for the life of Julian.[17] A considerable period of time separates the two documents; the Syriac text dates from the second half of the fourth century, while the Greek text was written around 444.[18] This interval does not cast doubt on Theodoret's veracity because, by his own account, he obtained his information on Julian Saba from a reliable source--Acacius, one of his disciples: *The story was transmitted to me by the holy bishop, the great Acacius, who knew accurately everything about him.*[19] The life of Julian Saba is also mentioned briefly by Chrysostom in his commentary on the epistle to the *Ephesians*:[20] *Ye know, doubtless, and have heard of, and some, perhaps, have also seen, the man whom I am now about to mention. I mean, the admirable Julian. This man was a rustic, in humble life, and of humble parentage, and totally uninstructed in all outward accomplishments, but full of unadorned wisdom. When he came into the cities, (and this was but rarely,) never did such a concourse take place, not when orators, or sophists, or any one else rode in.*[21] In addition, Julian is named by Palladius in his *Lausiac History*: *I heard of one Julian in the vicinity of Edessa, a man most ascetic, who mortified his flesh excessively and was reduced to skin and bones. At the close of his life he was deemed worthy of the honor of the gift of healing.*[22] Closely comparable with Palladius is a brief entry concerning

Monachisme, 104-108; Tisserant, 'Jacobe de Nisibe', 292-295; Nestle, 'Jakob von Nisibis', 559; Krüger, 'Jakob von Nisibis', 161-179; Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 70-92; Schwen, *Afrahat*, 6-10.

16 This text is published by Beck, in *CSCO* 322. Beck also translated it into German: cf. *CSCO*, 323. Beck, 'Ascétisme et monachisme', 292, takes the view that these hymns on Julian Saba were not written by St Ephrem but by one of Julian's disciples. Cf. also Beck, 'Asketentum', 357ff.) Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 42, rejects Beck's assertion, arguing for Ephrem's authorship. Cf. Vööbus' *Literary Critical Studies*, 65-66.

17 Cf. *HR*, II. A very early Syriac translation was made of this Greek text. See Bedjan, *Acta martyrum*, IV, 380-404; cf. also Vööbus, *Literary Critical Studies*, 44.

18 Cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 56-58; Festugière, *Antioche*, 247ff.

19 Cf. *HR*, II, 22.

20 Cf. *Eph.* XXI/VI, 4.

21 The translation is from *NPNF*, vol. XIII, 155-156.

Julian Saba in Sozomen's *Ecclesiastical History*: *About the same period, Julian practiced philosophy near Edessa; he attempted a very severe and incorporeal method of life so that he seemed to consist of bones and skin without flesh. The setting forth of the history is due to Ephraim, the Syrian writer, who wrote the story of Julian's life. God himself confirmed the high opinion which men had formed of him; for He bestowed on him the power of expelling demons and of healing all kinds of diseases, without having recourse to drugs, but simply by prayer.*[23]

According to Theodoret, Julian was from Osrhoene: *Julian, whom the people of the country in honour surnamed 'Saba' (the word means 'Old Man' in Greek), set up his ascetic cell in the land once called Parthia but now Osrhoene. It extends westwards to the very bank of the river (its name is the Euphrates while towards the rising sun its frontier is that of the Roman empire. It succeeded by Assyria, the western border of the kingdom of Persia, which lat people have called Adiabene. In this province are many great and populous cities, and a great extent both of inhabited countryside and of uninhabited desert.*[24] The exact location of Julian's retreat in Osrhoene was apparently Gallab (Gullab in Arabic).[25] Chrysostom relates that Julian was a simple peasant from a poor family, who had received no scholarly education. As with Jacob of Nisibis, Julian's entry into the ascetic life is shrouded in darkness. Some words from the Syriac hymns may shed some light on this period; it would seem that he began his ascetic training during his youth and spent fifty years pursuing his ascetic practices.[26] Given that Julian died in 367, therefore, one may assume that he started living the life of an ascetic early in the fourth century. As is often the case in the history of early Syrian asceticism, information concerning Julian's training is lacking. Theodoret says that he lived in a primitive and unrefined cave: *Repairing to the extremity of this desert, this man of God found a cave not made by hands, nor well and beautifully dug out, but able to provide some scanty shelter for those wanting refuge. he was glad to settle in the place, thinking it of more value than palaces shining with gold and silver. In it he resided,...*[27] Certainly, he pursued a life of strict mortification in the desert. Under his direction, a forerunner of the Syrian Church's coenobitic community

22 *Lausiac History*, 42. The translation is from Meyer.

23 *Lausiac History*, III, 14. The translation is from *NPNF*, vol. II, 293. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 45 believes that this text concerns a second Julian, who lived in the same area as Julian Saba. I would defend the reference to Julian Saba on the grounds of the strong similarities between Sozomen and Theodoret.

24 *HR*, II, 1; tr. 23.

25 Cf. Schiwietz's detailed research: *Das morgenländische*, 67. Also Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 46-47, and Canivet, *Monachisme*, 153.

26 Beck, *Hymnen auf Abraham*, II, 4; III, 7; IX, 4; cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 46.

27 Cf. *HR*, II, 2.

was founded. Julian Saba died on the 15th of February, 367, and was buried in Edessa, in the Church of the martyrs Guria, Habib, and Shmona.[28]

DISCIPLES

a. Jacob

Jacob *was by race a Persian and in physique tall and remarkable, and ... possessed a soul more wonderful than his physique; James was his name. After the death of the Old Man* (Julian Saba) *he was conspicuous in every virtue; he was distinguished and celebrated in not only the philosophical retreats of that region but also those of Syria, in which indeed he died, having lived, it is said, a hundred and four years.*[29] After Julian's death, Jacob the Persian spent his life in the monastery of Teleda near Antioch: *When that inspired man reached the end of his lifespan and passed to the better life, James the Persian and Agrippa, the leaders of the flock, hastened to the great Eusebius, thinking it better to be well led than to rule.*[30] He was renowned as a leader and spiritual father, qualities which, despite his great humility, did not remain hidden from his community.[31]

b. Asterius

Asterius came from a noble family. He became one of Julian's disciples while still an adolescent: *On another occasion, an adolescent born of a noble family and delicately nurtured begged the Old Man with more zeal than strength to share his journey to the desert.... This celebrated youth was Asterius.*[32] Julian immediately recognised the excellence of Asterius' spiritual qualities and predicted that he would go on to found an ascetic community: *Illuminated in his soul by divine grace, he foresaw quite clearly the perfection that the young man would possess. And he, a long time later, called by divine grace to be the trainer of many others in the same virtue, fixed his ascetic wrestling-school in the district round Gindarus, a very large village placed in subjection to Antioch.*[33]

c. Acacius

According to John of Antioch, Acacius was born in 321.[34] From a very early age he came under the influence of Asterius and was attracted to the ascetic life: *He* (Asterius) *also drew the great Acacius--I mean the famous, the celebrated*

28 Cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 66. For more details on the life of Julian Saba see Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 56-59; Festugière, *Antioche*, 247-252; Beck, 'Ascétisme', 291-294; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 45.

29 *HR*, II, 6; tr. 26.

30 *HR*, IV, 8; tr. 53.

31 Cf. *HR*, II, 6; IV, 8.

32 *HR*, II, 7; tr. 27.

33 *HR*, II, 9; tr. 28.

34 Cf. Price, *History*, 35. The place of his birth and his lineage are unknown, though one may presume he was from Gindarus, the place of his ascetic retreat.

one, preeminent in the monastic life, who emitted bright beams of virtue....[35] From 378/9 until 436/7 he was bishop of Aleppo (Beroea).[36] Theodoret refers to him as a famous bishop, who played a leading role in the struggle against heresy.[37] He was one of Theodoret's closest friends, and an important source of information for the *Historia Religiosa*.[38] After a long life, Acacius died in 437.[39]

d. Agrippa

Agrippa is mentioned by Theodoret in the course of his account of Eusebius of Teleda. Agrippa was first the disciple of Julian Saba and, afterwards, of Eusebius.[40] After the death of *the most godly Julian, the Old Man,* Agrippa and James the Persian moved to Teleda to be guided by Eusebius.[41] After the deat' of Eusebius (c. 400), Agrippa became the superior of the community of Tele where he gained distinction for his humility and simplicity.[42] He died bef 413.[43]

3. ABRAHAM QIDUNAYA

The two suriving documents relating to Abraham Qidunaya are in Syriac. They have both been wrongly attributed to St Ephrem. The first is a collection of 15 hymns,[44] which give no clear idea about the personality of Abraham Qidunaya--his social origin and background, the nature of his ascetic life, etc.--but deal exclusively with his spiritual presence. The author of these hymns remains unknown, though they were composed in the late fourth or early fifth century.[45] The second document is also by an unknown hand and was probably

35 *HR*, II, 9; tr. 28.

36 Cf. Canivet, *Monachisme syrien,* 113; Festugière, *Antioche,* 247.

37 Cf. *HR*, II,9,16,18; *HE*, IV, 24, V, 4,8,23,27; cf. also Canivet, *Monachisme,* 113-114.

38 Cf. *HR*, II, 9, 22. On the life of Acacius, cf. Ermoni, 'Acace', 241 f.; Quasten, *Initiations aux Pères de l'Eglise,* 482-83; Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische,* 184-190.

39 Cf. Festigière, *Antioche,* 247; Canivet, *Das morgenländische,* 113. Some scholars disagree with this date: Ermoni, 'Acace', 241, argues for a date of 432; Peeters, *Tréfonds,* 83, proposes the year 435; while Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische,* 190, gives a date of 436, which accords closely with Price's estimate of 436/7 (*History,* 35).

40 Cf. *HR*, IV, 8.

41 Cf. *HR* IV, 8.

42 Cf. *HR*, IV, 8-9.

43 He apparently died before Theodoret's first visit to Teleda in 413. Cf. Canivet, *Monachisme,* 167.

44 Cf. Beck's edition: *Hymnen auf Abraham Kidunaya,* 1-35; also, Lamy, *S. Ephraem hymni* III, 749-836. I refer to Beck, who has also translated his edition into German.

45 Cf. Stoop, 'Un mot sur les sources', 297ff, rejects the attribution to Ephrem, as does Peeters, 'Bulletin', 78. Beck 'Ascétisme, 291-292 = Askentum, 356-357 argues that the author could be either a monk or a layman. In his *History of Asceticism* II, 51-53, by contrast, Vööbus takes the view that the text is by St Ephrem. Cf. also Vööbus, *Literary Critical Studies,* 67-69. For the date of composition, cf. Beck, *ibid;* Burkitt, *S. Ephraim's Quotations,* 25; and

composed in the fifth century.[46] This text suffers from many inaccuracies. The author relates incidents concerning Abraham which are not strictly historical. For example, the story of how Abraham rescued his niece, Mary, from a life of prostitution is influenced by the Coptic legend of Salome.[47] The author also draws on Theodoret's *Historia Religiosa* XVII, Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca*, and the *Life of Antony*.[48] Despite these problems, however, the text is still an important source for the life of Abraham and for fifth-century asceticism in general.

Abraham was from Qidun, a village near Edessa.[49] From his childhood he attended Church and became familiar with the Scriptures. It is noted that he meditated on them assiduously.[50] While he was still a youth, his parents married him to a young girl. After seven days of married life, however, the light of God was manifested in his mind. He immediately left everything behind and travelled two miles outside the city, where he took up residence in a wasteland and rejoiced in praising the Lord.[51] His parents were very rich and Abraham's decision to renounce society and his marriage for the life of a hermit came as a great shock. But he remained firm and embraced the eremitic life once and for all.[52] We are unable to describe Abraham's ascetic training, for it is never mentioned in any of the documents which describe his life. Who was his spiritual mentor, and where did he live? These questions cannot be answered. We only know that Abraham was a recluse who lived inside a cell that was completely closed except for one very small window. This was used for the sole purpose of receiving food.[53] After living as a recluse for some time, Abraham

Vööbus, *Literary Critical Studies*, 67-69.

46 Published by Lamy in the *AB* X, 10-49; Bedjan used this text as the basis of his life of Abraham in his *Acta martyrum*, VI, 465-99. Lamy later published the same text in his *S. Ephraemi hymni*, IV, 1-84, with a Latin translation. The same text, with minor changes, was well known in Georgian, Greek and Latin; see Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 53. An English translation of a Latin version of Abraham's life was made by Waddell, *The Desert Fathers*, 285-332; for the Latin version see Wilmart, 'Les rédactions latines'. I refer to Lamy's Syriac text, some extracts of which have been translated into English by Brock & Harvey, *Holy Women*, ch. 1. For the date of this text see Brock & Harvey, *ibid.* 27, and Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 54-56.

47 Lüdtke, 'Die Koptische Salome-legend', 61ff.; Reveillout, 'Sage-femme Salomé', 409ff.; Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 169-172.

48 Cf. Brock & Harvey, *Holy Women*, 27; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 55f; and Peeters, 'Bulletin', 78.

49 Cf. Brock & Harvey, *Holy Women*, 27.

50 Lamy, *S. Ephraemi hymni*, IV, 15.

51 Cf. Brock & Harvey, *Holy Women*, 27; Beck, *Hymnen auf Abraham*, X, 15-24. The city referred to must be Edessa; the place of his retreat has not been identified, cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 56.

52 Lamy, *S. Ephraemi hymni*, IV, 15-17.

53 Lamy, *S. Ephraemi hymni*, IV, 17.

started preaching to the pagan community of Qidun. Accordingly, he became known as Abraham Qidunaya.[54] Abraham apparently reached an advanced age and we may presume that he began his ascetic life in the late third or early fourth century. He died on the first of December, 367, and his body was buried in the basilica of Edessa.[55]

DISCIPLES

a. Mary

According to the hymns attributed to Ephrem, Abraham had a number of disciples.[56] Unfortunately, nothing is known about any of them except Mary, his niece: *The blessed Abraham had a brother with an only daughter. When th brother died leaving his daughter an orphan, his relatives took her to live w her uncle. She was seven years old at that time, and Abraham told her to live the outer part of his home, while he lived as a recluse in the inner part. Ther was a small window that communicated between them, and it was through it that he gave the girl instruction in the Psalms and the Holy Scriptures. She used to keep vigil with him and minister to his needs.... When these twenty years had elapsed, Satan took notice of her and tried to ensnare her.... Now there was a man who was nominally a monk, who used regularly to come and visit the blessed Abraham on the pretext of friendship. One day he happened to see the blessed girl through the window. He fell in love with her at the mere sight and wanted to get hold of her and sleep with her. He allowed his mad desire for her to burn like a flame of fire in his heart. For a whole year he treacherously lay in wait for her, until he succeeded in softening her firm resolve, and the girl eventually opened the door of the house where she lived as a recluse and came out to see him. He assaulted her with his blandishments, bespattering her with the mud of his lust. Once the sinful episode had taken place, stupefaction seized hold of her mind: she tore off her garment she was wearing, beat her face and breasts in grief, and said to herself: 'I am now as good as dead: I have lost all the days of my life; my ascetic labours, my abstinence, my tears are all wasted, for I have rebelled against God and slain my soul; and upon my holy uncle I have imposed bitter grief.... It would be better for me to depart to some other place where no one knows me, seeing that I have died once for all, and no longer have any hope of salvation.' So Straightaway she got up and left for another town. She changed the precious monastic garb she had been wearing and established herself in a low tavern....*[57]

54 Lamy, *S. Ephraemi hymni*, IV, 19ff.

55 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 60. For more details on the life of Abraham Qidunaya see Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 166-179; Rouziès, 'Abraham Kidunaia', 175-177.

56 Beck, *Hymnen auf Abraham*, II, 6.

57 Brock & Harvey, *Holy Women*, 30-31.

When Abraham discovered Mary's seduction by the Evil One and her subsequent departure, he followed her in the hope of recalling her to the eremitic life.[58] Abraham's search obliged him to become 'a fool for Christ', a title which is common to many Near Eastern ascetics. Eventually Abraham found the tavern where Mary was a prostitute. He brought her back to the eremitic life and she spent the rest of her days in mourning: *She lived a life of exceptional virtue as, night and day, she begged God in her tears to have pitty on her and forgive her the sins she had committed. Very often those who passed that spot at night would stop and listen to the sound of her weeping, and would themselves weep with her and give praise to God.*[59]

4. MARCIANUS

The sum total of our information concerning Marcianus is contained in the third chapter of the *Historia Religiosa*.[60] Theodoret apparently obtained this information from Acacius and from the disciples *or the disciples of disciples of the great Marcianus.*[61] Marcianus was originally from Cyrrhus: *This man had as his fatherland formerly Cyrrhus, which I mentioned above,*[62] *and thereafter the desert; and leaving both the one and the other he now has heaven. The one gave birth to him, the other nurtured him and made him victorious, the third received him as one crowned.*[63] Marcianus came from a family of great wealth and renown: *he despised both the distinction of his family (for he was of noble descent) and an illustrious position at court.*[64]

58 Abraham's rescue of Mary recalls a story in the *Syriac Life*, where the example of Symeon the Stylite causes prostitutes to give up their sinful lives: 'Again, how many harlots came there and from afar saw him (Symeon), the Holy One, and renounced and left their places and the cities in which they had lived, and surrendered themselves to the Christ, and entering dwelt in convents and became vessels of honour, and with their tears they served their Lord and blotted out the list of their debts', *Syriac Life*, 546; tr. 136. This story of the life of *Abraham Qidunaya* published by Lamy casts doubt on the authenticity of the life of *Abraham Qidunaya*. The latter begins to look like a fictitive work from the fifth century, using the name and fame of Abraham to support an ascetic work about harlots converted by hermits.

59 Brock & Harvey, *Holy Women*, 39.

60 Cf. *HR*, III, 11.

61 Cf. *HR*, III, 23. Cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 252f.

62 Theodoret, *HE*, IV/XXV: 'There were also other men at this period who emitted the bright rays of the philosophy of solitary life. In the Chalcidian desert Avitus, Marcianus and Abraames, and more besides whom I cannot easily enumerate, strove in their bodies of sense to live a life superior to sense', tr. *NPNF*, III, 128.

63 *HR*, III, 1. The place of his retreat cannot be identified: 'Marcianos a vécu dans le désert de Chalcis, sous le règne de Valens; mais le texte de la Philothée ne permet pas de localiser davantage sa retraite.', Canivet, *Histoire* I, 247.

64 *HR*, III, 2; tr. 37. Concerning his position at court, cf. Price, *History*, 47: 'The meaning is probably that Marcianus at a young age received the honor of nominal membership of the senate of Constantinople, with the style clarissimus'.

Theodoret does not speak about Marcianus' ascetic training; he mentions that Marcianus began to pursue such a life but gives no details: *Bidding farewell to all this, he repaired to the heart of the desert, and built a small cell that was not even the size of his body. Surrounding it with another small wall, he was immured continuously and deprived of all human company....*[65] Marcianus' spiritual mentor is never mentioned. The roots of his asceticism and the sources of his instruction in the ascetic life remain unknown. Given that Marcianus died at an advanced age, one can assume with some confidence that he embarked upon his ascetic life during the first half of the fourth century. He attracted many disciples, who formed, under his guidance, one of the earliest centres of the coenobitic life in the Syrian Church. Marcianus' reclusive existence was made extremely difficult by the size of his dwelling. It was barely large enough for himself and too small to share with his disciples: *At first, as I said, he lived this voluntary prison on his own. Then when he admitted these two* (disciples), *he did not have them live with him; for the hut was not adequate for himself alone, being extremely small and causing him, whether sitting or reclining, much discomfort: when standing he was unable to hold himself erect, since the roof made him bend his head and neck; nor when lying down could he stretch out his feet, since the cell did not have a length equal to his body.*[66] Although Marcianus was the spiritual master of the desert of Chalcis, he was not the first ascetic of this region.[67] He *was the cause of great achievements,*[68] and his ascetic *plants* were *planted everywhere.*[69] He played an important role in defending the orthodox position of his Church against Arius.[70] Marcianus died around the year 380, having attained a great age.[71] His body was buried secretly in his retreat.[72]

DISCIPLES

a. Eusebius

Eusebius was one of two ascetics accepted by Marcianus as disciples: *After some time had passed, he admitted to live with him Eusebius, who became the inheritor of this sacred cell.*[73] Eusebius later became the head of the first ascetic

65 *HR*, III, 2; tr. 37-38.
66 *HR*, III, 5; tr. 39.
67 Avitus came before him, cf. *HR*, III, 12.
68 *HR*, III, 19; tr. 45.
69 *HR*, III, 23; tr. 46.
70 Cf. *HR*, III, 16.
71 Price, *History*, 47. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 196 believes that Marcianus died in 392.
72 Cf. *HR*, III, 18. For more details on Marcianus, cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 195-202; Festugière, *Antioche*, 252-257; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 185-186.
73 *HR*, III, 4; tr. 38.

community to take its inspiration from Marcianus.[74] Eusebius advocated a radical form of asceticism, involving severe mortification: *he had as his oratory and dwelling a certain cistern that lacked water, living in this way for a total of three years.*[75] Information on Eusebius' life is very scarce. Nothing is known of his origins, his birth, or the date of his death. One may suppose that he came from Chalcis, the region of his ascetic retreat.

b. Agapetus[76]

Agapetus and Eusebius were the first two disciples of Marcianus; they are both mentioned by Theodoret in the *Historia Religiosa.* Agapetus founded two ascetic communities in the region of Apamea: *After some time had passed, he admitted two to live with him: Eusebius... and Agapetus, who transplanted this angelic rule to the region of Apamea. There is a large and populous village whose name is Nicerte. In it Agapetus founded two retreats of philosophy, one called after his own name and the other after that of the wondrous Symeon....*[77] Sometime later, Agapetus, who was originally from the region of Apamea, *was counted worthy of an episcopal see, appointed to the charge of a flock and entrusted with tending his own fatherland.*[78]

c. Symeon

Symeon, who was the abbot of one of the two retreats founded by Agapetus, *was conspicuous in this philosophy for a total of fifty years.*[79]

d. Sabinus

Another disciple of Marcianus was Sabinus: *There was a disciple of this man named Sabinus, who expended his body on innumerable labors.*[80] He was considered *the third in the monastery, not the first.*[81] He mortified his body

74 Cf. *HR*, III, 5-6.

75 *HR*, III, 19, tr. 45.

76 The term *agapetos* was used of virgins who had consecrated themselves to Christ; it may be an equivalent to the Syriac word *ihidaya*. The word was generally used to refer to the 'continent' ones, those whose aim was to be 'single' in the sense of *ihidaya* and *monachos*. See Guillaumont, 'Le nom des Agapetes', 30-37.

77 *HR*, III, 4; tr. 3.

78 *HR*, III, 5; tr. 39. 'Agapetus was made bishop of Apamea in c. 388'. Price, *History*, 47.

79 *HR*, III, 4; tr. 38-39. Price, *History*, 473 says: 'Symeon is presumably the 'priest and monk of the territory of Apamea' who was an ally of John Chrysostom and received an extant letter from him (ep. 55) in c. 405'. Canivet, *Monachisme syrien*, 188, argues that this Symeon is certainly not Symeon the Stylite. See also Jackson, *Theodoret, NPNF*, 128; Chrysostom, *Ep.* 55; and Tillemont, IX, 304. This is apparently not the Simones Priscus of *Relig. Hist.* VI. Cf. Festigière, *Antioche*, 253: '(Symeon) L'un des nombreux Syméon, différent du stylite, différent aussi de Syméon l'Ancien qui fait l'objet du ch. VI de l' *HR* Ce dernier s'était retiré sur l'Amanus'.

80 *HR*, III, 21; tr. 46.

81 *HR*, III, 21. Evidently, the first in the monastery was the superior, but we have no idea of the

continuously and with some severity, and it appears that he had the power to expel demons.

e. Basil

His (Marcianus') *philosophy also profited the wonderful Basil who a long time later built his monastic dwelling near Seleucobelus--it is a city of Syria*[82] *--and who, while glorious in many other forms of virtue, was especially glorious in the possession, dear to God, of charity and in the divine work of hospitality.*[83]

5. AVITUS

A certain Avitus was the first to set up his ascetic cell in another desert, more northerly than this one[84] *and lying a little to the east, under the north wind th is near to the east wind. He was older than Marcianus in both age and labor philosopher nurtured in the austere life.*[85] The location of Avitus' retreat has r been identified. Given that *he was older than Marcianus in both age and labo* his ascetic life may have started early in the fourth century. Theodoret mentions that Avitus and Marcianus were both alive during the time of Valens (364-378).[86] One can therefore say with certainty that Avitus died sometime after 378. Avitus may be the first recluse of the Chalcidian desert mentioned by Theodoret,[87] but he was not the first ascetic of this region and nothing in Theodoret would support such a claim.[88] Time and again the reader encounters Theodoret's silence concerning the ascetic training of many important figures of the late-third and fourth centuries and Avitus is no exception.[89] We are

identity or function of the second, or even of the responsibilities of Sabinus, 'the third'. The location of this monastery is still unknown, cf. Canivet, *Histoire* I, 287.

82 Canivet, *Monachisme,* 192 says: 'Un autre disciple de Marcianos, Basile, fonda, sans doute vers la même époque que les couvents de Nikertai, un monastère à Seleucie du Bélus que l'on a proposé d'identifier avec Gisres Sugur, sur l'Oronte, aux confins de l'Apamène et de l'Antiochène. Mais on ne sait rien sur ce monastère'. And he adds with special reference to Honigmann, Dussaud and Tchalenko: 'Gisr es Suger est aux limites de l'Antiochène et de l'Apamène... et se trouve à 45 km de Qal'at el Mudiq. Avec Epiphaneia (Hama), Aréthuse (Restan), Raphanée (Rafniye), Mariammé (Miryamin), Larissa (Saizar), Balanée (Baniyas), tous situés au sud et à l'ouest d'Apamée, Séleucobélus est le seul des évêchés suffragants de Syrie IIe qui ne soit pas certainement identifié..., si on le situe à Gisr es Sugur, il serait le seul au nord d'Apamée.' For more details, cf. Festugière, *Antioche,* 312; Devreesse, *Patriarcat,* 183.

83 *HR*, III, 20; tr. 45-46.

84 i.e., that of Marcianus.

85 *HR*, III, 12; tr. 42.

86 *HR*, IV, 25, quoted above.

87 Theodoret provides the only source of evidence for Avitus' existence.

88 For an opposing view, cf Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische,* 198: 'Avitus war, wie oben gesagt, der erste und älteste Einsiedler der Wüste von Chalcis....'

89 Cf. in this work, Jacob of Nisibis, Julian Saba, Ammianus, Publius, Palladias, Abraham, Symeon the Elder, Aphrahat, Theodosius, Romanus.

completely ignorant of his ascetic lineage as of the inspiration for his austere life in the desert. So little is known of Avitus that it is impossible to form any clear idea of his life.

6. ABRAHAM

In that desert (of Chalcis) *there was a certain old man called Abraham, a man hoary in hair*[90] *and hoarier still in thought, glorious in every virtue and always shedding tears of compunction.*[91] Theodoret's is the only text which refers to Abraham and it provides little information about his life. According to Theodoret, Abraham was still alive during the reign of Valens,[92] so his death must have occurred sometime after 378. Abraham seems to have remained largely detached from the life of the Church and, for a while, had no contact with it whatsoever. Our only other knowledge of Abraham is that local people called him *the old man*,[93] and that he communicated regularly with Marcianus.[94]

7. AMMIANUS

According to Theodoret, Ammianus was the founder of the famous monastery of Teleda, which was near Antioch: *Lying east of Antioch and west of Beroea, there is a high mountain that rises above the neighboring mountains and imitates at its topmost summit the shape of a cone. It derives its name from its height, for the local inhabitants are accustomed to calling it Koryphê (Summit). On its very peak there was a precinct of demons much revered by those in the neighborhood. To the south stretches out a plain curved in shape,*[95] *surrounded on either side by not very high lines of hill; these extend to the road for horses and admit paths from either side that cut from south to north. In this plain have been built villages both small and great, adjoining the hills on either side. At the very skirts of the high mountain there is a large and well-populated village, which in the local speech they call Teleda.*[96] *Above the mountain-foot there is a dale not very steep, but sloping gently towards that plain and facing the south wind. Here one Ammianus built a philosophical retreat, a man glorious in many other forms of virtue but surpassing others in his total modesty*

90 Canivet, *Histoire* I, 278, asserts that the beard was a symbol of the patriarch.

91 *HR*, III, 17; tr. 44.

92 *HE*, IV, 25.

93 *HR*, III, 17.

94 *HR*, III, 17.

95 Price, *History*, 57: 'This is the plain of Dana, on the limestone ridge in the east of the territory of Antioch; it is dominated by Mount Barakat, on which had stood the great shrine of the Semitic deities Zeus Malbachos and Salamanes. On the plain and its monasteries, see Tchalenko, *Villages antiques* I, 103-182.' Cf. also Clermont-Ganneau, *Études d'archéologie* II, 35ff.

96 'Le village actuel porte le nom de Tell 'Ade et les ruines du monastère voisin, à 1300 m. à l'ouest, celui de Deir Tell 'Ade', Canivet, *Histoire* I, 292. On the Greek name Teleda cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 242 and Cumont, *Études Syriennes*, 32.

of spirit.[97] Theodoret thinks that Ammianus was alive during the reign of Valens,[98] though he started his ascetic life much earlier. It appears that he may have founded his ascetic school as early as c. 350.[99] Ammianus was an admirer of *the great Eusebius,* to whom *he often hastened..., begging to get a helper, and a trainer and teacher of the wrestling-school founded by him* (Ammianus).[100] Although he tells us that Ammianus founded the monastery of Teleda, Theodoret does not say whether he was the first ascetic in the region. Similarly, he gives us no idea about where, and with whom, Ammianus trained in the ascetic life. This is another of those unanswerable questions that one comes up against in Theodoret. Ammianus died during the last quarter of the four century.[101]

8. MARIANUS

Marianus was Eusebius' uncle and his spiritual teacher.[102] *This Marian, having tasted divine love, was not willing to luxuriate in good things on his own, but made many others his fellow-lovers.*[103] Although Theodoret gives only a very brief summary of his life, Marianus evidently played an important role in the development of asceticism in the Antiochene region.[104] It is not clear from Theodoret whether the disciples who followed him were an organised ascetic community.[105] Marianus' retreat was not far from that of Ammianus and the existence of these two ascetics at the same time and in close proximity may indicate that asceticism was already present in the Antiochene region.[106] Marianus was *a faithful servant of God--to say so much is sufficient, since the Master honored the great Moses with this title.*[107] Theodoret says that Marianus was another of those who lived during the time of Valens;[108] his death, therefore, should be placed after 378.[109]

97 *HR*, IV, 2; tr. 49-50.

98 *HE*, IV, 25.

99 Cf. Price, *History*, 57 and Canivet, *Monachisme*, 167. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 242, believes that Ammianus only began to gather disciples in the last quarter of the fourth century. This view must be mistaken because the monastery of Teleda was flourishing by 367 and Ammianus died in the last quarter of the fourth century.

100 *HR*, IV, 2; tr. 50.

101 In view of the fact Ammianus was still alive under Valens, one may presume that he died sometime after the emperor.

102 Cf. *HR*, IV.

103 *HR*, IV, 3; tr. 50.

104 *HR*, IV, 3.

105 *HR*, IV, 3. See Canivet, *Histoire* I, 295 and Festugière, *Antioche*, 259.

106 'He was twenty-five stades distant', *HR*, IV, 3. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 168, identifies this place as Turmanin. Peña, *Cénobites syriens*, 22, agrees with this assessment.

107 *HR*, IV, 3; tr. 50; the biblical quotation is from *Heb.* 3, 5.

108 *HE*, IV, 25.

109 Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 205, would disagree: 'Marianus starb einige Jahre vor

9. EUSEBIUS OF TELEDA

In view of the fact that Eusebius pursued his ascetic life in Teleda, one may suppose that he was originally from this area. He was led into asceticism by his uncle, Marianus, who trained him and his brother: *He was guided into this form of virtue by his uncle Marianus.... He* (Marianus) *captured the great Eusebius and also his brother, who was his brother too in his mode of life, for he did not think it sensible to capture for virtue those who were quite unrelated to him while leaving his nephews uncaught.*[110] His life as a recluse was spent in an unlit cell where he kept complete silence: *He was twenty-five stades distant* (from Ammianus), *immured in a tiny dwelling that did not even have windows.*[111] Theodoret adds: *During the entire life of his uncle the great Eusebius continued neither speaking to anyone nor seeing the light but uninterruptedly immured; and after his death he embraced this life until the wonderful Ammianus won him over, bewitching him with much entreaty.*[112] At the request of Ammianus, Eusebius later agreed to leave his cell and take charge of Ammianus' monks: *With these and like words he* (Ammianus) *charmed the divine man; digging through his voluntary prison, he led him out and away, and entrusted to him care of the brethren.*[113] His renown attracted many followers and from that time Teleda became a famous ascetic school in the Syrian Church.[114] As Eusebius was encouraged by his uncle, it seems probable that he began to pursue his austere life when he was still young.[115] He became a recluse during the first half of the fourth century.[116] Eusebius' ascetic life lasted for a long time. He spent many years under the guidance of Marianus and then *he lived on for more than forty years after making this rule* (of mortification).[117] Eusebius *lived on a very long time*[118] and may well have spent more than seventy years as an ascetic. In addition to the 'more than forty years' in Teleda, he spent a long period with Ammianus. I would estimate that he died around 400 AD.[119] Theodoret is our

367'.

110 *HR*, IV, 3; tr. 50.

111 *HR*, IV, 3; tr. 50.

112 *HR*, IV, 4; tr. 50.

113 *HR*, IV, 5.

114 Cf. *HR*, IV, 8.

115 Cf. *HR*, IV, 3.

116 I suggest c. 320 (for Eusebius' chronology, see below); in general, the leaders of ascetic communities described by Theodoret were not young.

117 *HR*, IV, 6; tr. 52. This period of 'more than forty years' began sometime after Eusebius had taken charge of the community of Teleda; cf. *HR*, IV, 5-6.

118 *HR*, IV, 8; tr. 53.

119 Teleda was founded c. 350 and Eusebius probably became its head c. 355. Teleda became famous after 367, under Eusebius. Given a starting point of 350-355, therefore, Theodoret's 'more than forty years' brings one to c. 400; cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 167. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 206, argues for c. 407 on the grounds that Julianus' death (367) occurred

only source for Eusebius, as indeed for the whole region of Teleda at this period. Yet he had no direct contact with him. Theodoret obtained his information from the disciples of Eusebius in Teleda and from Acacius.[120] Eusebius was the spiritual father of the most important ascetic community in the Syrian Church before the middle of the fifth century.[121]

DISCIPLES

Eusebius had many disciples: *This renown of his spread everywhere and drew all the lovers of virtue to him.*[122] Of those named by Theodoret, I will make no further mention of Agrippa. What we know of his life has been recounted above. He was not originally one of Eusebius' disciples but merely completed his training in Teleda under Eusebius' leadership.

a. David

David succeeded Agrippa, c. 413, as leader of the community of Tele which at that time comprised *one hundred and fifty men.*[123] During his visit Teleda, Theodoret met David personally: *When he* (Agrippa) *departed from life, the godly David, the sight of whom I myself enjoyed, received the post of superior, a man who had in real fact, in the words of the godly Apostle, mortified his limbs upon earth. He so profited from the teaching of the great Eusebius that, while living forty-five years in this retreat, he lived out all this time without wrath and anger.*[124] According to Theodoret, David provided excellent spiritual guidance for his community and was an important figure during the first half of the fifth century.[125] One may presume that David originally came from the environs of Teleda, though there is little evidence to support this idea; the date of his death is unknown.

b. Olympius

In the middle of this discussion one Olympius, by race a Roman, himself admirable in his way of life, honored with the priesthood and exercising the second position of authority there....[126] We know little more of Olympius than

shortly after Eusebius took charge of Teleda. By 367, however, Eusebius' renown had already attracted many important disciples, amongst them Jacob the Persian and Agrippa (*HR*, IV, 4-7). Schiwietz does not acknowledge that Eusebius became head of Teleda before the beginning of the forty-year period.

120 Theodoret was a sympathetic admirer of Teleda; he learnt of its history through personal contacts with the place and its inhabitants (*HR*, IV, 10). For Acacius cf. *HR*, IV, 7.

121 For more details cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 157-262; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 186-187; Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 203-210.

122 *HR*, IV, 8; tr. 53.

123 *HR*, IV, 9; tr. 53.

124 *HR*, IV, 9; tr. 53. Theodoret met David during his first visit to the monastery c. 413 (*HR*, IV, 9-10); the period of David's leadership is otherwise unknown. Cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 57, 167; *Histoire* I, 313.

125 Cf. *HR*, IV, 9-12.

that he was an ascetic during the first half of the fifth century. His presence in Teleda is an indication that the fame of the monastery had started to attract Westerners to Syrian asceticism.

c. Abba

There was in that godly place (Teleda) *a man--they call him Abba--... grown from Ishmaelite stock,*[127] *.... He first entered on this ascetic life with one who at that time lived in the desert*; only later did he join the community of Teleda.[128] Theodoret relates that Abba was still alive when he wrote his *Historia Religiosa*. By this time he had already *spent thirty-eight years*[129] in Teleda and one may therefore assume that Abba started living there in 406.[130] He practised a very severe form of asceticism. Abba eventually succeeded David as leader of Teleda. The date of his succession is unknown, though he was already at the head of the monastery in 444 when Theodoret's *Historia Religiosa* was written. Abba's presence in Teleda is important because it indicates an Arab involvement in the asceticism of the fourth and fifth centuries.[131] Before he came to Teleda early in the fourth century, Abba had lived in the Syrian desert with Marôsas, a fact which may prove that Arab ascetics existed in places other than Teleda at that time.

d. Marôsas

Marôsas was the superior of an ascetic community in the Syrian desert near Teleda until, along with Abba, he decided to join the community of Teleda: *He* (Abba) *first entered on this ascetic life with one who at that time lived in the desert, an excellent gymnast of this kind--his name was Marôsas--; afterwards the latter as well, leaving rule over others, entered this flock together with Abba, and lived on for no short time, and after striving gloriously and becoming celebrated departed from life.*[132] Sozomen adds that Marôsas was from Nechilis: *not less distinguished was Marôsas, a native of Nechilis.*[133] Marôsas came to Teleda in 406; he died after having *lived on for no short time.*[134]

126 *HR*, IV, 10; tr. 54.

127 I.e. an Arab.

128 *HR*, IV, 12; tr. 55.

129 *HR*, IV, 12.

130 This calculation is based on the fact that the *Historia Religosa* was completed in 444; cf. Canivet, *Histoire* I, 321; *Monachisme*, 167. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 208, agrees with Canivet; Price, by contrast, believes that Abba moved to Teleda in 402; according to him the *Historia Religiosa* was completed in 440 (cf. *History*, 57).

131 Cf. Canivet, *Histoire* I, 320.

132 *HR*, IV, 12; tr. 55.

133 Tchalenko, *Village antiques*, 134, 153, identifies Nechilis with Neghaule in the N.E. of Jabal Sheikh Barakat (cf. *ibid.* map III, 1/GIII-17). Canivet, *Monachisme*, 168; Festugière, *Antioche*, 312; and Dussaud, *Topographie*, 206, take the same view.

134 *HR*, IV, 12; tr. 55.

10. PUBLIUS

At this same time there lived a certain Publius, who was both good-looking in physique and possessed a soul that matched his physique, or rather displayed one far more wondrous than his body. He originated from the curial order, while his city was where the celebrated Xerxes, marching against Greece and eager to cross the river Euphrates with his army, assembled a large number of ships, yoked them to each other and in this way bridged the river; he called the place Zeugma,[135] *giving it a name from the event. Originating from here and stemming from such a family, he repaired to a high place not more than thirty stades*[136] *distant from the town. Here he built a small hut and gave away everything he had inherited from his father--I mean home, property, herds clothing, vessels of silver and bronze, and anything else that went with them.*[137] Publius later attracted many Greek- and Syriac-speaking disciples and guid the whole community in both languages--a fact which bears witness to the exte of his education.[138]

The ascetic retreat in Zeugma may have dated from c. 350.[139] Publius lived during the reign of Valens and died in the last quarter of the fourth century--perhaps in 380.[140] Theodoret derived his information on Publius from hearsay and from disciples of Publius, whom he saw in person: *Such is what I have learnt of the great Publius of which some came to me by hearsay, and some by my seeing his disciples, recognizing the teacher in his disciples and discovering the trainer through his athletes.*[141] Despite of giving such precise

135 Cumont, *Études Syriennes*, 119ff identifies Zeugma with Balqis, a village west of Apamea on the opposite bank of the Euphrates; cf. also Canivet, *Monachisme*, 154ff; Festugière, *Antioche*, 313; Voöbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 17; Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 190f; and Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 289f. Canivet and Cumont seem to be incorrect when they identify it as Thapsakos.

136 5.4 km

137 *HR*, V, 1; tr. 58.

138 C.f. *HR*, V, 3-5. Festugière, *Antioche*, 313 says that Publius came from the curial order ('de milieu sénatorial'); Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 191 agrees with Festugière. Cf. also Canivet, *Histoire* I, 329.

139 Price regards the year 350 as most likely (cf. *History*, 621); Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 191, prefers 363; while Canivet, *Histoire* I, 339, argues that the monastery was founded at the same time as Teleda.

140 Cf. *HE*, IV/28. Cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 192 says: 'Nach einer Errechnung Tillemonts, die weiter unten mitgeteilt werden wird, ist Publius, der währen der Regierung des Kaisers Valens (364-378) zu den berühmten Mönchen Syriens gehörte, etwa in Jahre 380 gestorben'. Canivet, *Histoire* I, 339, thinks Publius could have been dead by 360-370, though his argument disregards Theodoret, according to whom Publius died after 378. Moreover, it would seem that the first superiors of the monastery of Zeugma assumed responsibility sometime during the last quarter of the fourth century.

141 *HR*, V, 10; tr. 61-62.

details about his sources, Theodoret says nothing about Publius' ascetic training, nor does he identify Publius' mentor. The Publius described by Theodoret might well be the person to whom Chrysostom addressed a letter.[142]

DISCIPLES

a. Theotecnus I

Theotecnus succeeded Publius in the leadership of the Greek-speaking community of Zeugma: *As soon as he had completed his contest and departed from this life and crossed to that life without sorrow Theotecnus became superior over the Greek-speakers.*[143] The origin of Theotecnus is unknown, but he could have been from Zeugma or the surrounding area.[144] His death probably occured around the end of the fourth century, for he lived on only a short time and passed on the post of superior to Theodotus.[145] After the death of Theotecnus I, three men were successive leaders of the Greek-speaking community of Zeugma: Theodotus, Theotecnus II, and Gregory.

b. Theodotus

Theodotus was originally from Armenia: *This Theodotus, originally from Armenia, beheld this ascetic company and was at first enrolled among the subjects, obeying the government of the great Theotecnus. When, as I said, the latter made his departure, he received the leadership, and abounded in such good qualities as almost to obscure the fame of his predecessors....*[146] He probably died during the first quarter of the fifth century: *after shepherding the sheep for twenty-five years, he was gathered to his fathers, reared to a fine old age, in the words of divine scripture, and handed over the reins to Theotecnus, his nephew in birth and brother in character.*[147]

c. Theotecnus II

Theotecnus II, whose leadership in Zeugma may date from c. 420, *acquired in his youth every form of philosophy and departed with the fame of his predecessor.*[148] He was the nephew of Theodotus and, like him, originally an Armenian. The time of death is completely unknown, though again one may note that it definitely occurred before 444.[149]

142 Cf. notes above.

143 *HR*, V, 6; tr. 60.

144 Like Theotecnus II, he may have been an Armenian.

145 *HR*, V, 6; tr. 60. In view of his youth, it is possible that he died around the same time as Publius. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 192, believes that Theodotus succeeded Theotecnus c. 390, which might indicate the date of Theotecnus' death.

146 *HR*, V, 7; tr. 60. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 192, thinks that Theodotus became a leader at Zeugma in 390.

147 *HR*, V, 7; tr. 61.

148 *HR*, V, 9; tr. 61.

149 His successor, Gregory, was still alive when Theodoret composed the *Historia Religiosa*.

d. Gregory

Gregory[150] learnt his severe asceticism from Publius. He was known to be especially harsh where food was concerned.[151] He was still alive at the time of Theodoret's *Historia*; his origins remain unknown.[152]

e. Aphthonius

Aphthonius was Publius' successor as head of the Syriac-speaking community of Zeugma.[153] He continued in office for a long time: *Apthonius continued for a long period to look after the flock and direct it according to the rules in force.*[154] Then, *that divine Aphthonius, after presiding over the choir f more than forty years, received the episcopal see.*[155] Sometime after 405 Aphthonius became a bishop. We know that it could not have been before 40 because John Chrysostom wrote to him at this time and he was still head of t community of Zeugma.[156] Finally, *after having thereby adorned his episcopate and increased his virtue, he repaired with this cargo to the divine harbor.*[157] We do not know the date of Aphthonius' death, except to say that it was before 444 (the date of the *Historia Religiosa*), and possibly much earlier.

11. SYMEON THE ELDER

Symeon the Elder started his ascetic life in the desert near Cyrrhus.[158] Later, on account of his fame, he moved to Mount Amanus near Antioch:[159] *As a result of such miracles this man of God became famous and attracted many of the neighboring barbarians--this desert is inhabited by those who boast of Ishmael as their ancestor. In his desire for quiet he was compelled to leave his cave. At the end of a long journey he reached the mountain called Amanus; this*

150 *HR*, V, 9.

151 Cf. *HR*, V, 9.

152 Cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 193 and Canivet, *Monachisme*, 156.

153 Cf. *HR*, V, 6.

154 *HR*, V, 6; tr. 60.

155 *HR*, V, 8; tr. 61.

156 Cf. Chrysostom, *Eph.* 70, *Eph.* 93; for more details cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 193-194. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 156, thinks that Aphthonius assumed responsibility in Zeugma in 366, though he does not know when Aphthonius became bishop. Given that Publius did not die before 378, however, Aphthonius could not have become leader of the Syriac-speaking community before then. If one further accepts Schiwietz's judgement that Publius died in 380, then Aphthonius could not have become a bishop before 420. I am in general agreement with Schiwietz and regard c. 430 as the most likely date of Aphthonius' accession to the bishopric.

157 *HR*, V, 8; tr. 61.

158 According to the *HR*, VI, 2, 4, Symeon's first retreat was located in 'the desert to the east of Cyrrhus'; cf. Price, *History*, 68; Canivet, *Histoire* I, 348; Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 236.

159 Mount Amanus, just north of Antioch, is now Gâvur Dalgari; cf. Canivet, *Histoire* I, 353, and Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 236.

mountain, previously burdened with much polytheist madness, he cultivated with many miracles of every kind and planted the piety that is now practised on it.[160] Symeon spent his life in a tiny cave, and always sought to live alone: *He persevered for the greatest possible length of time in embracing the eremitical life and dwelling in a tiny cave; he enjoyed no solace from men, for he chose to live alone, but discoursed persistently with the God of the universe.*[161] After his pilgrimage to Sinai,[162] Symeon *built two philosophic retreats: one on the ridge of the mountain we mentioned above, the other on the very skirts of the mountain-foot beneath.*[163] The origin of Symeon the Elder is not mentioned by Theodoret, but he could be from Cyrrhus, his first ascetic home. Theodoret did not meet Symeon but obtained most of his information from his own mother, who had been blessed by Symeon: *His blessing, while he* (Symeon) *was still alive, was enjoyed by my blessed and thrice-blessed mother, who often related to me many of the stories about him.*[164] Symeon lived during the time of Valens [165] and died sometime after his reign, possibly c. 390.[166]

12. PALLADIUS

The celebrated Palladius was of the same date and way of life as Symeon, and his familiar and friend; in frequenting each other, it is said, they enjoyed mutual benefit, stimulating and stirring each other on to holy rivalry. He was immured in a cell near a large and well-populated village which has the name Imma.[167] Palladius was not a disciple of Symeon the Elder; he was rather *his familiar and friend.*[168] As he *was of the same date* as Symeon, his retreat was probably established around c. 370.[169] It seems that he too lived during the reign of Valens and one may therefore assume that he died in the last quarter of the

160 *HR*, VI, 4; tr. 64.

161 *HR*, VI, 1; tr. 63.

162 Cf. *HR*, VI, 7-12.

163 *HR*, VI, 13; tr. 67. Price, *History*, 68, believes that Symeon moved to Mount Amanus 'around 370', so that the two retreats must have been founded sometime after this date.

164 *HR*, VI, 14; tr. 67.

165 Cf. Theodoret, *HE*, IV, 25.

166 Cf. Price, *History*, 68; Canivet, *Histoire* I, 365, gives a date of between 375 and 380.

167 *HR*, VIII, 1; tr. 69. Imma has been identified as Yeni Sehir; cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 181. It is likely that the monophysite monastery, Beit Mar Faladus, was built on the site of Palladius' cell; cf. Tchanlenko, *Village antiques*, III, 80.97. For more details see Honigmann, *Historische Topographie*, 3; Dussaud, *Topographie*, 231; and Cumont, *Études Syriennes*, 7.

168 Canivet, *Monachisme*, 181-182 and Festugière, *Antioche*, 263-264, 314, believe that Palladius and Abraham were disciples of Symeon the Elder. There is nothing in Theodoret to suggest such a possibility; indeed, the expressions used of Palladius would suggest that all three ascetics were equals: 'The celebrated Palladius was of the same date and way of life as Symeon' (*HR*, VII, 1) and 'of the same company was the wonderful Abraham' (*HR*, VII, 4). Cf. Price, *History*, 71.

169 Cf. Price, *History*, 71.

fourth century.[170] Theodoret never met Palladius and he gives no indication as to the source of his information.

13. ABRAHAM

Of the same company was the wonderful Abraham, who, while dwelling in a place called Paratomus,[171] *emitted flashes of virtue in every direction.*[172] The scarcity of information concerning Abraham has shrouded his life in darkness. We know nothing of his origins, his first steps in the ascetic life, the date of his death, or where he learned his austerity. A similar level of uncertainty surrounds Palladius. Abraham apparently flourished in the second half of the fourth century, during the reign of Valens.[173]

14. APHRAHAT

Aphrahat was a Persian. In early adulthood he renounced the religion of his parents and converted to Christianity: *That the nature of all men is one and tho it is simple for those who wish to practise philosophy, whether they are Gree or barbarians, is easy to learn from many other examples. Aphrahat on his ow however, is sufficient to show this clearly; for this man, though born and bre among the lawless Persians, stemming from such parents and educated in their customs, advanced to such virtue as to eclipse those who have been born of pious parents and have received a pious education from childhood. First of all, thinking nothing of his family, although it was distinguished and illustrious, he hastened to worship the Master, in imitation of his forebears the Magi; then, in disgust at the impiety of his kin, he chose a foreign country in preference to his own, and repaired to Edessa, a city large and well-populated and exceptionally illustrious in piety. Finding a hovel outside the city walls and immuring himself, he tended his own soul, pulling out, like an excellent cultivator, the thorns of the passions by the roots, weeding the divine crop, and offering to the Master the seasonal fruits from the seeds of the Gospel.*[174] Around 360/1 (though possibly earlier), Aphrahat moved from Edessa to Antioch:[175] *From there* (Edessa) *he*

170 Theodoret, *HE*, IV, 25.

171 This site has not yet been identified, though it was in the vicinity of the retreats of Symeon the Elder and Palladius; cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 182.

172 *HR*, VII, 4; tr. 70.

173 Cf. Theodoret, *HE*, IV, 25.

174 *HR*, VIII, 1; tr. 72.

175 Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 278, believes this move occurred during the reign of Constantius (337-361). Festugière, *Antioche*, 268 argues for two possible dates: one between 360 and 376, the other between 361 and 377. The story of Aphrahat's garment (*HR*, VIII, 4) cannot be significant when calculating Aphrahat's arrival at Antioch because we simply do not know whether the 'sixteen years' mentioned in connection with it began in Antioch, Edessa, or elsewhere. Festugière must be incorrect in assuming that the 'sixteen years' began in Antioch because Theodoret provides no evidence whatsoever in support of this. Canivet, *Histoire* I, 376, and *Monachisme syrien*, 159f, argues for a date of 360/1, which agrees, in

repaired to Antioch, which was being severely shaken by the storm of heresy. Settling in a philosophic retreat in front of the town and knowing just a few phrases of the Greek language, he drew vast numbers to hear the divine oracles; using a language that was semi-barbarous, he brought forth the offspring of his thought, receiving such streams from the grace of the Holy Spirit....[176] Aphrahat was closely involved with the Antiochene Church's struggle against Arianism.[177] Theodoret relates that, when he was still young, his mother took him to visit Aphrahat: *I myself saw him and reaped the blessing of that holy hand when still an adolescent and accompanying my mother on a journey to the man. Half-opening the door to her, according to his wont, he honored her with conversation and blessing, but me he received within and gave me a share in the wealth of his prayer.*[178] This visit probably occurred c. 407,[179] which means that Aphrahat must have died sometime after this date, though probably before 413.[180] Aphrahat was buried in the Church of the Martyrs in Antioch.[181] Aphrahat's first entry into the ascetic life and the school of his ascetic training, are unknown. It would appear that he took up asceticism during the first half of the fourth century, and it may be that his contact with the ascetic community at Edessa lay behind his vocation. This Aphrahat must not be confused with the Aphrahat of the *Covenanters*. They were two different personalities who played different roles in the Church. Aphrahat of the *Covenanters* did not live in Edessa or in Antioch, and he died during the second half of the fourth century.

15. PETER THE GALATIAN

We hear of the Galatians in Europe, those of the West, and we know of those in Asia, their ancestors, who had settled by the Euxine Sea; it was from the latter that stemmed the blessed Peter, thrice and many times blessed. Reared by his parents for seven years, they say, from the time of his birth, he spent the whole of the rest of his life in the contests of philosophy.[182] Peter was probably born c.

part, with Festugière's estimate. Price, *History*, 80, also gives 360/61: 'The reference, if exact, must be to Constantius II's measure against the Nicene party at Antioch, which dates to 360/1; cf. Theodoret, *HE*, II. 31 (27).'.

176 *HR*, VIII, 2; tr. 73.

177 Cf. *HR*, VIII, 2, 5-14.

178 *HR*, VIII, 15; tr. 79.

179 Theodoret was born in 393,, thus in 407 he would have been at the beginning of his youth (age 14). All the historians agree with this analysis: cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 280; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 160; *Histoire* I, 403; and Price, *History*, 80.

180 Festugière, *Antioche*, 268, says: 'Aphrahat est mort dans la première décade du Ve siècle'. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 160, agrees with Festugière. Price, *History*, 80, says: 'He lived long enough to know Theodoret as an adolescent but not apparently as a young man: this dates his death to between 407 and 413'.

181 Cf. *HR*, X, 8. On this Church, cf. Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 109.

182 *HR*, IX, 1; tr. 81.

304 and started his ascetic life c. 311, when he was seven years old. His first retreat was in his homeland, Galatia. After his pilgrimage to Palestine, where he saw the places associated with Jesus Christ,[183] he established his retreat on Mount Silpius, just N.E. of Antioch--its name is now Habib en Najjar:[184] *After enjoying what he desired* (in Palestine), *he settled at Antioch; observing the city's love of God, he preferred the foreign city to his homeland, counting as fellow-citizens not those of the same race and family but those of the same convictions, sharing the faith and bearing the same yoke of piety. Having fallen in love with this life, he did not pitch a tent or set up a cell or erect a hut, but spent all his time in the tomb of another; it had an upper story and projecting balcony, to which a ladder was attached to admit those who wanted to ascend. He continued immured in this for an immensely long time.*[185] Theodoret's mother knew Peter and visited him many times;[186] while he was still a bo Theodoret met Peter: *He often sat me on his knees and fed me with grapes a bread; my mother, who had experience of his spiritual grace, ordered me to re his blessing once each week.*[187] One is led to believe that Theodoret collect many stories about Peter from his own mother. It seems that he did not meet Peter as a mature man; Peter probably died before Theodoret reached adulthood. Peter's death, at the age of 99,[188] must be dated c. 403.[189] Finally, Peter the Galatian seems to have passed his life without disciples. Daniel was not a true disciple, but only a companion: *There came to him a raving maniac, full of the action of the evil demon. He cleansed him through prayer and freed him from that diabolical frenzy. Since he had no wish to go away, but begged to give his services in return for this cure, he made him his companion.*[190]

183 Cf. *HR*, IX, 2.

184 Cf. Theodoret, *HE*, IV, 24; cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 280; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 157-163.

185 *HR*, IX, 3; tr. 82.

186 Cf. *HR*, IX, 4ff.

187 *HR*, IX, 4; tr. 83.

188 *HR*, IX, 1.

189 For this date, cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 161; Price, *History*, 88. On the contrary, Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 283, argues that Peter was born in 330 and died in 430: 'Theodoret mag demnach damals 6-7 Jahre alt gewesen sein und dieser Besuch um das Jahr 400 stattgefunden haben. Die Wahrscheinlichkeitsrechnung, die Tillemont in Anknüpfung an dieses letzte Datum angestellt hat, ergibt, daß Petrus der Galater etwa um das Jahr 330 geboren wurde und vor dem Jahr 430 starb'. I do not agree with Tillemont and Schiwietz on this point because Theodoret's text concerning Daniel's prophecy is contradictory: 'And I heard them (Peter and his companion, Daniel) conversing about me: Daniel... said that I too would share in this noble service of him; but that inspired man did not agree that this would happen, adducing in argument the love my parents had for me', *HR*, IX, 4; tr. 83. According to this, Peter disagrees with his companion, Daniel; moreover, Theodoret gives no indication that Peter lived until Theodoret's adult years.

190 *HR*, IX, 4; tr. 82-83. Similarly, Symeon the stylite had companions who were not true

16. THEODOSIUS

Rhôsus is a Cilician city, on the right as one sails into the Cilician Gulf.[191] *South and east of it is a high mountain, thickly grown and shaded; it teems with wild beasts in its thickets. Finding here a dale sloping towards the sea, the great and celebrated Theodosius, building a small cell, embraced the evangelical life in solitude. A man originating from Antioch, distinguished for the luster of his family,*[192] *he nevertheless abandoned home, family, and all the rest,*[193] *in order, in the Gospel phrase, to buy the pearl of great price.*[194] Theodosius founded his ascetic community c. 370[195] in Skopelos (Ras el Khanzir or Hinzir Burnu).[196] His rule for his disciples was 'ora et labora'. In 403, when the Isaurians started their raids against the Byzantine empire, the Church authorities brought him to the safety of Antioch.[197] *When he arrived at Antioch, he settled in an abode beside the river, and attracted to himself all who knew how to gather such a harvest.*[198] It seems that Theodosius did not found a new ascetic community in Antioch, but merely *settled in an abode beside the river,* where he preached the word of God.[199] He died shortly after his arrival at Antioch, probably c. 404, though perhaps a little later.[200] Theodosius was buried in the same tomb as Aphrahat and Julian in the Church of the Martyrs in Antioch: *After living on a short time, he migrated to the angelic choir. His sacred body was carried through the middle of the city, adorned with that famous icon as if with gold chaplets, and escorted by everyone, including those entrusted with the great*

disciples.

191 'Rhôsos, aujourd'hui Arzus, en Turquie, à 7 km au sud d'Iskenderun (Alexandrette)', Canivet, *Monachisme,* 183; cf. also, Dussaud, *Topographie,* 442f. On the diocese of Rhôsos, cf. Devreesse, *Patriarcat, 159;* Honigmann, *Evêques et Evêchés,* 82.

192 'Theodoret means that Theodosius belonged to one of the great curial families of Antioch, and enjoyed the honorary rank of clarissimus (implying membership of the senatorial order. Cf. III, 2 with note ad loc.)', Price, *History,* 93.

193 Cf. *Mt.* 13, 46.

194 *HR,* X, 1; tr. 89.

195 This is Price's suggestion, cf. *History,* 93.

196 Skopelos has been identified with Ras el Khanzir or Hinzir Burnu; cf. Canivet, 'L'emplacement du monastère de S. Theodose'; *Monachisme syrien,* 183. John Moschus, *The Spiritual Meadow,* 80, indicated the location of this monastery as early as the sixth century; his description of life there agrees with Theodoret's (cf. *HR,* X, 1-6).

197 Cf. *HR,* X, 5-6.

198 *HR,* X, 6; tr. 91.

199 Festugière, *Antioche,* 265, believes that this retreat was a convent: 'Cédant à leurs prières, Théodose vint à Antioche où de nouveau, il fonda un couvent'. Canivet, *Monachisme,* 184, rejects this idea; cf. also *Histoire* I, 447.

200 Cf. Canivet, *Monachisme,* 184; Price, *History,* 93; Festugière, *Antioche,* 265, argues for a date between 370 and 380, on the basis that the Isaurian raids started in 368. In fact, the raids mentioned by Theodoret occurred between 403 and 408; cf. Canivet, *Histoire* I, 445; *Monachisme,* 184; Price, *History,* 93; and Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische,* 290.

offices. There was strife and dispute round the bier, as everyone pressed eagerly to carry it, in their desire for blessing therefrom. So borne along, he was buried in the shrine of the holy martyrs, obtaining the same abode and roof[201] *as Julian the victorious contestant in piety; the same tomb received him that received also the inspired and blessed Aphrahat.*[202]

DISCIPLES

Of Theodosius' many disciples, Theodoret names only two: Helladius and Romulus.

a. Helladius

To the leadership of the flock succeeded the wonderful Helladius, who continued for sixty years in that place, and then received from God the first see of Cilicia, not abandoning his earlier philosophy but each day adding to those labors the exertions of the episcopal office.[203] We do not know when Helladius became the bishop of Tarsus. It is recorded that he was present at the Council Ephesus (431). He was involved in the monophysite controversy and expelled 435 because he opposed the decrees of the Council.[204]

b. Romulus

The blessed Romulus, who had been his (Helladius') *disciple, was made leader of a huge flock, and his choir has continued to this day loyal to the same mode of life. (By the retreat lies a village called in Syriac Marato).*[205] Romulus was still alive in 444, when Theodoret was writing his *Historia Religiosa*: *his choir has continued to this day.*[206]

17. ROMANUS

Romanus was originally from Rhôsus, the place of Theodosius' retreat. He chose Mount Silpius, just south of Antioch, as the location for his own ascetic life: *The Great Theodosius, while originating from Antioch and contending in the mountains of Rhôsus, returned to the city of Antioch to finish his life there. In contrast, the godly Romanus, both born and first reared at Rhôsus, took up the contests of virtue in Antioch;*[207] *he pitched his tent outside the circuit of the city*

201 Festugière, *Antioche*, 265 says: 'Aphraate fut enterré dans le même tombeau que Théodose, et peut-être que le martyr Julien....' Cf. Lassus, 'Antioch-on-the Orontes', II, 38.

202 *HR*, X, 8; tr. 92.

203 *HR*, X, 9; tr. 92.

204 Cf. Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 51-52, 133,155. On Tarsus, the diocese of Helladius, cf. *ibid.* 151-153; Vailhé, 'Anazarba', 1504-1506; Hirschfeld, 'Anazarba', 2101; Gough, 'Anazarbus', 85ff.

205 *HR*, X, 9; tr. 92. Marato has not yet been identified, despite the efforts of Dussaud, *Topographie*, 205; cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 184-185; Peña, *Cénobites*, 25.

206 *HR*, X, 9; tr. 92.

207 In Theodoret, *HE*, IV, 25. Theodoret wrote that Romanus spent his life in 'the mountain which is in the neighbourhood of the great city (Antioch).' The name of this mountain is

by the foot of the mountain, and lived all the time in someone else's house,[208] *and this a tiny one.*[209] Romanus was distinguished by his simplicity, his meekness and quietness, and by his power of healing.[210] Theodoret reports that Romanus lived during the reign of Valens.[211] Apparently, Theodoret did not meet Romanus.[212] It is likely that he died before the end of the fourth century.[213] The school in which Romanus and Theodosius were trained is unknown.

18. ZENO

Zeno was from a rich family and he served in the army of the emperor Valens. In 378, after the death of Valens, he gave up his aristocratic life and joined the ascetic community on Mount Silpius, near Antioch. He was originally from Pontus in Asia Minor, where he benefited, as he himself acknowledged, from the 'streams' of his neighbour, the great Basil: *Not many know of the wonderful Zeno, but those who do cannot adequately express admiration of him. After renouncing exceptionally plentiful wealth in his native land--it was Pontus--, he benefited, as he used to tell, from the streams of his neighbor the great Basil, watering the land of Cappadocia, and yielded fruits worthy of the watering.*[214] *Immediately after the violent death of the emperor Valens,*[215] *he laid aside the military girdle--he had been enrolled among those who carry swiftly the letters of the emperors. Darting from the palace into a tomb,*[216] *(for the mountains near Antioch contain many),*[217] *he lived alone;*[218] *purifying his soul and constantly cleansing its eye, he perceived the vision of God....*[219]

Mount Silpius.

208 On this expression, cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 266.

209 *HR*, XI, 1; tr. 94.

210 Cf. *HR*, XI, 2-4.

211 Cf. Theodoret, *HE*, IV, 25.

212 Cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 266; Price, *History*, 95. Canivet, *Monachisme* 85, asserts that Theodoret probably did meet Theodosius and Romanus.

213 Cf. Price, *History*, xvi, and *HR*, XI, 5.

214 Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 284, and Festugière, *Antioche*, 281 agree that Basil's influence helped to prompt Zeno to pursue his ascetic vocation. One should acknowledge Canivet's opinion, *Histoire* I, 463, that Zeno did not necessarily know Basil, who died in 379. Similarly, Price, *History*, 99, minimizes Basil's influence on Zeno. If one trusts Theodoret, however, it is difficult to deny Basil's influence, which is also suggested by Zeno's move from Pontus to Antioch. It remains true to say, however, that Zeno preferred the eremitic life to the coenobitic.

215 Valens died in 378; cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 148.

216 Peter the Galatian spent a long time in a tomb, cf. *HR*, IX, 3.

217 Mount Silpius.

218 See Festugière, *Antioche*, 281: 'ce qui prouve le grand renom des anachorètes d'Antioche, c'est que, au lieu de se rendre dans le monastère de Basile, Il (Zeno) courut du palais imperial à l'un des tombeaux de cette ville, où désormais il vécut dans la retraite'.

219 *HR*, XII, 1-2; tr. 96.

Zeno was one of many ascetics who lived on Mount Silpius,[220] and his ascetic education was based on the spiritual precepts of this Antiochene mountain.[221] Theodoret, who is our only source about Zeno, met him when he visited Mount Silpius to make use of the collection of books: *I* (Theodoret) *too, when I first conceived the desire to find out about him and went up the mountain, saw him holding the jars in his hands.... I happened at that time to be a reader of the sacred books for the people of God.*[222] Theodoret describes Zeno as a humble man, with an absolute trust in God's providence.[223] He died in 418,[224] after spending 40 years as an ascetic: *Who could adequately express admiration for an old man who had completed forty years in asceticism, preserving at such a summit of philosophy such modesty of spirit.*[225]

19. MACEDONIUS

Macedonius also lived on Mount Silpius. He was born around 330 and started his ascetic life c. 350.[226] He was known as the Barley-eater and his fame reached as far as Phoenicia, Cilicia, and the whole of Syria: *Macedonius, called the Barley-eater--for this food won him the name--, is known by all, Phoenicians, bordering on them, of whom some were eyewitnesses of the man's miracles, while others heard reports that celebrated and circulated them.... He had as his wrestling-ground and stadium the tops of mountains;*[227] *he did not settle in one place, but now dwelt in this one and transferred to that. This he did not through dislike of the place, but to escape from the crowds of those who visited him and flocked from all sides. He continued living in this way for*

220 Theodoret, *HE*, IV, 25: 'But the mountain which is in the neighbourhood of the great city was decked like a meadow, for in it shone Petrus, the Galatian, his namesake the Egyptian, Romanus Severus, Zeno, Moses and Malchus, and many others of whom the world is ignorant, but who are known to God', tr. 128-129.

221 Not discounting the probable influence of Basil.

222 *HR*, XII, 4; tr. 97. According to Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, Theodoret was between 14 and 16 years old, so his visit must have taken place between 407 and 409. Canivet, *Histoire*, 467, asserts that Theodoret was between 17 and 18 years old, and that his visit took place between 410 and 412. Cf. also, *Monachisme*, 161.

223 Cf. *HR*, XII, 4-7.

224 If Zeno started his ascetic life in 378, after Valens' death, he must have died around 417/418. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 285; Festugière, *Antioche*, 283; and Canivet, *Monachisme*, 161, are in general agreement with this date. They argue that Zeno died during the episcopate of Alexander of Antioch (413-421). Shortly before his death, Zeno asked Alexander to act as steward of his parents' wealth (cf. *HR*, XII, 7). Price, *History*, 99, puts his death somewhere around the middle or latter half of the second decade of the fifth century. He also places Alexander's episcopacy around this time.

225 *HR*, XII, 5; tr. 97; cf. Theodoret, *HE*, V, 19.

226 These dates are taken from Price, *History*, 108, who says that Macedonius was 'born 330, an ascetic from c. 350, ordained c. 385, died c. 420'.

227 Mount Silpius, cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 283; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 162; Price, *History*, 108.

forty-five years, using neither tent nor hut, but making his stops in a deep hole, whence some called him Gouba, a word which, translated from the Syriac into the Greek language, means 'pit'. At the end of this time, now an elderly man, he yielded to those who besought him, and set up a hut; later, at the entreaty of his friends, he made use of cottages that were not his own but belonged to others.[228] *He continued living in the hut and the cottages for twenty-five years, so that the time of his contests came together to seventy years.*[229] Theodoret's parents were on good terms with Macedonius. They were much influenced by him, even to the extent that Theodoret's mother was encouraged to lead an ascetic life in her own home.[230] The young Theodoret, whose birth was assisted by the prayers of Macedonius, used to visit him: *I myself often enjoyed his blessing and teaching. To exhort me he often said: 'You were born, my child, with much toil: I spent many nights begging this alone of God, that your parents should earn the name they received after your birth....' Such was the exhortation that godly man always continued to give me....*[231] Theodoret describes Macedonius as innocent, simple, and distinguished by his powers of discernment. He intervened in political affairs to defend the cause of justice.[232] after spending seventy years in a life of austerity. His funeral was a great event: *all the citizens and aliens, and those entrusted to administer the great offices, bearing the sacred bier on their shoulders, conveyed it to the shrine of the victorious martyrs, and buried the holy body, dear to God, with those godly men, Aphrahat and Theodosius.*[233] Macedonius' ascetic origins were on Mount Silpius and one may presume that his ascetic education was conducted in that famous school.

20. MAËSYMAS

Maësymas was an ascetic and a priest at a village near Cyrrhus. He lived in Cyrrhus before Theodoret's arrival there in 423: *In the time before our own*[234] *there was a certain Maësymas, who was Syrian in his language, had had a rustic upbringing and manifested every form of virtue. having been conspicuous in the solitary life, he was entrusted with the care of a village.*[235] Theodoret is very vague about the period of Maësymas' life and the date of his entry into asceticism. It seems likely, however, that Maësymas began his ascetic training in

228 Romanus also kept no cell of his own; cf. *HR*, XI, 1.

229 *HR*, XIII, 1-2; tr. 100-101.

230 Cf. *HR*, XIII, 3, 16-17.

231 *HR*, XIII, 18; tr. 107.

232 Canivet, *Monachisme*, 162, believes that Macedonius died in 417. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 289, gives a date of around 430.

233 *HR*, XIII, 19; tr. 107.

234 See Price, *History*, 113. Canivet, *Histoire* II, 11, wonders whether Theodoret refers to the time of his own birth or his own arrival in Cyrrhus. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 241, asserts that he lived during the time of Valens (364-378).

235 *HR*, XIV, 2; tr. 110. The village of Maësymas has not been located.

earnest during the first half of the fourth century. He could well have trained in the school of Cyrrhus. Theodoret did not know Maësymas, who died before 423, and his information was gathered from the laypeople and ascetics of Cyrrhus.[236]

21. ACEPSIMAS

Acepsimas was a recluse who lived in Cyrrhus for sixty years.[237] During this time he maintained complete silence and kept himself hidden from view: *At the same time lived Acepsimas, whose fame extends throughout the East. Immuring himself in a cell, he persevered for sixty years neither being seen nor speaking.*[238] *Turning into himself and contemplating God, he received consolation from this in accordance with the prophecy that says, 'Take delight in the Lord, and may he grant you the requests of your heart'.*[239] *He received the food that was brought to him by stretching his hand through a small hole. To prevent his being exposed to those who wished to see him, the hole was not dug straight through the thickness of the wall, but obliquely, being made in the shar of a curve.*[240] Acepsimas died before Theodoret's arrival in Cyrrhus in 423.[241] He was buried in his place of retreat: *Everyone wished to seize his body a proposed to carry it off to his own village,*[242] *but someone resolved the dispu by revealing the oaths of the saint, saying the saint had extracted oaths*[243] *to commit it to burial in this same place.*[244] Acepsimas was probably trained in Cyrrhus where he originated.

22. MALCHUS

In 391, St Jerome completed a life of Malchus the hermit in Latin.[245] Before the end of the sixth century, a Greek translation had been made of the Latin life.[246] There is also a Syriac version of the life of Malchus which seems to be a

236 Theodoret: 'Many other stories of this kind are told about this godly person', *HR*, XIV, 5; tr. 112.

237 According to Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 242, the name Acepsimas means 'seeking God' in Syriac and has the same meaning as the Syriac name Aqebalaha. Bedjan, *Acta martyrum* II, 351-396, thinks that Acepsimas is the name of a Persian martyr, persecuted under Sapor II; cf. Peeters, *Tréfonds*, 180.

238 A similar life was led by Salamanes, *HR*, XIX, 1; James, *HR*, XXI, 4.

239 *Ps.* 37, 4.

240 *HR*, XV, 1; tr. 114.

241 Cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 85; Price, *History*, 116.

242 Similar events occurred at the death of Maron, cf. *HR*, XVI, 4.

243 The breaking of an oath would lead to divine punishment, cf. Canivet, *Histoire* II, 25.

244 *HR*, XV, 5; tr. 115-116.

245 Cf. Van den Ven, 'S. Jérôme', 256-257. The Latin version of Malchus' life has been published many times: 'Représentée par un très grand nombre de manuscrits, elle a été bien des fois publiée, soit isolément, soit avec les oeuvres du grand Docteur; en dernier lieu, les Bollandistes l'ont rééditée au tome IX d'Octobre les *Acta Sanctorum*, pp. 64-69', Van den Ven, 269.

246 Cf. a detailed study of the Greek version in Van den Ven, 'S. Jérôme', 418-450, 208-306.

translation of the Greek.[247] The three texts--Latin, Greek and Syriac--are very similar, though they differ in a few details.[248] The main source for the present work is the Latin version, which is the only original work of the three and the one which was composed during the period in question.[249] Although St Jerome's life of Malchus was entitled: *The Life of Malchus, the captive monk,*[250] Malchus was not the only name by which this hermit was known. In the Syriac manuscripts he was also referred to as *Mark the hermit.*[251] According to St Jerome, Malchus lived in the desert of Chalcis in a hamlet called Maronia: *Maronia is a little hamlet some thirty miles to the east of Antioch in Syria....*[252] *There was at the place at that time an old man by name Malchus, which we might render 'king', a Syrian by race and speech, in fact a genuine son of the soil.*[253] Malchus was originally from Nisibis, the famous Mesopotamian city, and was an only son: *My son, said he* (Malchus), *I used to farm a bit of ground at Nisibis and was an only son....*[254] Despite this, he decided to renounce everything and join the monastic life: *My parents regarding me as the heir and the only survivor of their race, wished to force me into marriage, but I said I would rather be a monk. How my father threatened and my mother coaxed me to betray my chastity requires no other proof than the fact that I fled from home and parents. I could not go to the East because Persia was close by and the frontiers were guarded by the soldiers of Rome; I therefore turned my steps to the West, taking with me some little provision for the journey, but barely sufficient to ward off destitution. To be brief, I came at last to the desert to Chalcis which is situated between Immae and Beroea farther south. There, finding some monks, I placed myself under their direction, earning my livelihood by the labor of my hands, and curbing the wantonness of the flesh by fasting.*[255]

247 The earliest Syriac manuscript is from the seventh or eighth century. Cf. Van den Ven, 'S. Jérôme', 416-417, 208-258. Budge, *The Book of Paradise,* vol. I, 344-357, and vol. II, 279-290, published the Syriac text along with an English translation.

248 Cf. Van den Ven, 'S. Jérôme', 211, 415. Also Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische,* 214-220.

249 I refer to the English translation Freemantle, *The Principal Works of St. Jerome,* 315-318, (abbreviated to Jerome, *Malchus*).

250 Cf. Jerome, *Malchus,* 315.

251 We do not know why he was known by two names. It could be that Mark (Marcus) is a deformation of Malchus, cf. Van den Ven, 'S. Jérôme', 208ff; Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische,* 216; Canivet, *Monachisme,* 239.

252 Cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische,* 221: 'Das dorf Maronia, etwa 40 km östlich von Antiochia entfernt, lag jedenfalls an der Landstraße, die von Antiochia gleichfalls in östlicher Richtung an der Burg Imma vorbei nach Beroea (und schließlich nach Mesopotamien) führte'. Canivet, *Monachisme,* 187, believes that Yeni Sehir, near Imma, could be the location of the monastery of Malchus.

253 Jerome, *Malchus,* 315 (2).

254 Jerome, *Malchus,* 315 (3).

255 Jerome, *Malchus,* 315-316 (3).

After many years at the monastery, Malchus' father died and he decided to go home and spend some time with his aged mother. While travelling from Beroea to Edessa, he was captured by the Ishmaelites (the Arabs), who forced him to remain with them and work as a shepherd. Subsequently, and in spite of his monastic vows, his Arab master forced him to marry. Malchus' wife, however, was a deeply sympathetic character, who understood his commitment to God and, in particular, respected his vow of chastity. They decided to lead a life of complete virginity and to avoid all physical contact. Eventually, Malchus and 'his wife' escaped from captivity. Malchus placed 'his wife', whom he loved as a sister, into a convent and returned to his monastery, where he continued with his life of mortification and contemplation.[256] When Malchus related this story to St Jerome he was an old man, while Jerome was still young: *Malchus was an old man, I a youth, when he told me these things.*[257] St Jerome, however, did not set down the story of Malchus until he was an old man: *I who have related the to you am now old, and I have set them forth as a history of chastity for chaste.*[258] Given that Jerome met Malchus during the five years which he sp in the desert of Chalcis (374-379), one may assume that Malchus died during last quarter of the fourth century. He was already old when Jerome met him. would seem, therefore, that he started his ascetic life early in the second half of the fourth century, and perhaps sometime before.

23. ABRAHAM

Abraham also came from Cyrrhus, and he practised his ascetic life in the desert of Chalcis: *This man too was a fruit of the region of Cyrrhus, for it was born and reared there that he gathered the wealth of ascetic virtue.*[259] Abraham went to convert *a large village* (which) *was engulfed in the darkness of impiety* in the Lebanon.[260] After successfully converting the village and remaining as its priest for three years, Abraham *went back to his monastic dwelling.*[261] He did not remain there for long because he was chosen to be bishop of Carrhae (Harran).[262] Abraham died around 422 in Constantinople, during his visit to the imperial palace.[263] His body was brought to Carrhae, where he was buried: *For*

256 Cf. Jerome, *Malchus*, 316-318 (3-10); also Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 220-228.

257 Jerome, *Malchus*, 318 (10).

258 Jerome, *Malchus*, 318 (10).

259 *HR*, XVII, 2; tr. 120. According to Theodoret, the school of Cyrrhus was founded by Maron, cf. *HR*, XVI, 1.

260 Dau, *History of the Maronites*, 185, identifies this village as Aqura-Afka in the high Lebanese mountains, near the source of the river Adonis. His position, stated in his Arabic edition of the *History of the Maronites* I, 88-90, seems tenable. He also believes that Abraham went to Lebanon during the 400's, though possibly before the beginning of the fifth century.

261 Cf. *HR*, XVII, 2-4.

262 Cf. *HR*, XVII, 5-8.

when he died and the emperor (Theodosius II, 408-450) *learnt of it, he wanted to bury him in one of the sacred shrines, but realizing that it would be right to restore to the sheep the body of the shepherd, he himself escorted it at the front of the procession, followed by the choir of empresses, all the governors and governed, soldiers and civilians. With the same zeal the city of Antioch received him, and the cities after it, until he reached the great river. Along the bank of the Euphrates there hastened townspeople and foreigners....*[264] According to Theoderet, our only source, Abraham had no disciples, only *companions* whose names are not mentioned.[265] It would also appear that Abraham founded an ascetic community with his companions in the Lebanese village.[266] Perhaps because he did not meet Abraham, Theodoret is vague on this subject.[267] Abraham started his ascetic life before 364 because Theodoret mentions him as one of those ascetics who lived under the reign of Valens.[268] One may therefore assume that he was born during the second quarter of the fourth century.

24. SALAMANES

Since I think I would be wronging virtue if I were not also to make known to posterity the life of the wonderful Salamanes,[269] *but allow it to be buried by oblivion, I shall, in summary, make the narration. To the west of the river Euphrates, lying on the very bank, is a village called Capersana.*[270] *Originating*

263 Cf. *HR*, XVII, 9. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 56; Rouzies, 'Abraham', 167; and Canivet, *Monachisme*, 128, all agree with this date of death. Price, *History*, 125, is also in general agreement.

264 *HR*, XVII, 10; tr. 123.

265 In some cases a disciple is referred to as a 'companion'. Theodoret is not always clear on this point, though one may suppose that the 'companions' of Abraham were ascetics from the school of Cyrrhus. Cf. *HR*, XVII, 2.4.

266 Cf. *HR*, XVII, 2, 4; Festugière, *Antioche*, 315.

267 Cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 56; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 85.

268 Cf. Theodoret, *HE*, IV, 25.

269 Salamanes is an old semitic name from the root Salam; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 239, traces the name back to its origin: 'En Assyrie, Salam est attesté par des noms théophores comme Salmanasar; en Syrie, on le rencontre à Sidon à l'époque hellénistique; en Palmyrène et au Ie/IIe x.: 'Ce nom se rattache au culte qui était rendu tout près de Basufan sur le Seih Barakat à Zeus Madbachos et Salamanès, dieux ancestraux des populations d'alentour. Le culte de Salamanès dont on sait peu de chose parait avoir été très répandu en Mésopotamie et en Syrie' (H. Seyrig, ap. G. Tchalenko, t. 3, p. 15, n. 4); cf. encore *IGLS*, VII, 4027 (Solômanès, qui pourrait être une variante phonétique de Salamanès, apparait dans une inscription païenne, près d'Arados.... *Ibid.* p. 54). Comme anthroponyme, cf. *IGLS*, V, 2187, 2251'.

270 The location of this village is not known for certain. Dussaud, *Topographie*, 459f identifies it as Ainé Aniana, on the east bank of the river, adding that Constantius crossed the Euphrates at this point in 361. Honigmann, *Histor. Topog.* 5/233, does not regard Dussaud's identification as definitive. Canivet, *Histoire* II, 59, who based his opinion on Streck, identifies Capersana as Apamea-on-Euphrates. He adds (*ibid.* 61): 'Si la localisation de

from this village, he embraced the quiet life. Finding a small hut in the village on the opposite bank, he immured himself, leaving neither door nor window. Once a year he would dig a hole at ground level and receive his food for the whole year, never speaking to anyone,[271] *and he continued in this way not for a short time but for the longest possible.*[272] Salamanes' life was led in total silence; even when he was among people who conducted him from village to village *he maintained silence as before.*[273] Although Salamanes lived before Theodoret rose to the episcopate (423), we do not know the dates of his birth and death, or when he embarked upon his ascetic career. Nor do we know the name of his ascetic mentor.[274]

25. MARIS

There is a village called by us Omêros.[275] *Here the inspired Maris built a small hut and continued immured in it for thirty-seven years. It received much rain from the neighboring mountain; in the winter season it even poured ou streams of water. Both townsmen and countrymen are aware what harm th causes bodies; to the peasants are manifest the diseases that are produce thereby. Nevertheless, not even this induced this sacred person to change his cell, but he maintained his endurance until he had accomplished his course.*[276] Before becoming a recluse, Maris spent about fifty-three years in society, practising asceticism as part of his daily life: *He passed the earlier part of his life in the labors of virtue, whence he preserved purity in both body and soul....* He was *living like recluses* and *looked after his own soul, and then increased his virtue through the labors of reclusion.*[277] Maris lived for a total of ninety years, thirty-seven spent as a recluse, fifty-three in society.[278] Although Theodoret visited him many times in his capacity as bishop of Cyrrhus, he gives no clue as to the date of Maris' death. One may note, however, that Maris died before the completion of the *Historia Religiosa* in 444.[279] There is no doubt that Maris was

Kapersana sur la rive droite est exacte, le plus proche évêché d'Osrhoène était Birtha (aujourd'hui Biredjik)'; cf. Dussaud, *Topographie*, 461; Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 295.

271 A similar life was led by Acepsimas, *HR*, XV, 1; and James, *HR*, XXV, 2.

272 *HR*, XIX, 1; tr. 129.

273 *HR*, XIX, 3.

274 Cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 245; Festugière, *Antioche*, 297-298; Canivet, *Histoire* II, 59; Price, *History*, 130.

275 Dussaud, *Topographie*, 471 notes that just south of Cyrrhus there is a place called Omar Simro. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 201, however, identifies Omêros as the village Amaranli, 'situé un peu plus au Sud et à une heure et demie ou deux heures de marche de Cyrrhus'. Peña, *Reclus*, 76, agrees with Dussaud.

276 *HR*, XX, 1; tr. 131.

277 *HR*, XX, 2; tr. 131.

278 Cf. *HR*, XX, 3.

279 Price, *History*, XVI gives a date of c. 430, though he offers no evidence in support of his assumption.

educated in the ascetic school of Cyrrhus but we do not know the name of his spiritual master.

26. THALASSIUS

Tillima[280] *is a village in our region, which formerly received the seeds of the impiety of Marcion, but now enjoys cultivation by the Gospel.*[281] *South of it is a ridge neither too rough nor too flat; here an ascetic dwelling was built by the wonderful Thalassius,*[282] *a man adorned with many other good qualities, but surpassing the men of his time in simplicity of character, gentleness, and modesty of spirit. I say this, not relying on hearsay alone, but having had experience; for I visited the man and often enjoyed his sweet company.*[283] This text from Theoderet is the only information we have on Thalassius, who apparently received his ascetic education from other ascetics of the school of Cyrrhus. Theodoret does not give much information about Thalassius, despite having known him personally. One may estimate that he died around 423.[284] Among the disciples of Thalassius, Theodoret named only Limmaios, whose life shall deal with later.

27. ZEBINAS

Zebinas[285] lived near Cittica.[286] Cittica was a village near Cyrrhus, in which Zebinas was buried, sometime before 423.[287] The bodies of certain martyrs were

280 Peña, *Reclus*, 287, identifies Tillima as Tellalak: 'En continuant notre voyage vers Cyrrhus, nous sommes passés près d'une localité que les Kurdes appellent Tellalak, site que nous identifierons avec le village de Tillima, près duquel vivait l'ascète Thalasse. Située à quelque 10 km au sud de Cyrrhus, la localité conserve un peu de son ancienne toponymie et correspond très bien à la description de Théodoret: 'Dans la direction du sud s'élève une colline, ni trop rocailleuse ni très escarpée'. Cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 195.

281 Theodoret, *HE*, V/XXXI, tr. 152, refers to Marcion's influence in the diocese of Cyrrhus: 'On hearing that in our district some men were infected with the plague of Marcion, he (John Chrysostom) wrote (c. 400) to the then bishop (Leontius, bishop of Ancyra) charging him to drive out the plague, and proffering him the aid of the imperial edicts'. In his Letter 81, tr. 277, he also says: 'But not to mention these matters I led eight villages of Marcionists with their neighborhood into the way of truth'. And in Letter 113, tr. 294, explains: 'By the help of God's grace working with me more than a thousand souls did I rescue from the plague of Marcion'.

282 Canivet, *Monachisme*, 195 believes that the founding of this ascetic retreat could date from the last years of the reign of Valens, i.e. sometime before 378.

283 *HR*, XXII,1; tr; 150.

284 Canivet, *Monachisme*, 195, proposes this date.

285 According to Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 242, Zebina means the one who is redeemed or purchased: 'Zebin=der Losgekaufte'. The name derives from the Aramaic root *zban*, to buy or to redeem. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 240, mentions that it occurs in a list of the Antiochene martyrs: 'Peeters, *Bibl. hag. orient.*, 700: dans un 'Sermon sur les martyrs' attribué par Ebedjésu à Eusèbe, apparaît dans une liste dont les sept premiers noms et celui de Babylas sont ceux d'évêques d'Antioche; cf. Delehaye, *Origines*, 193; d'après Eusèbe, *HE*, VI, 23, 3 évêque d'Antioche de 230/231 à 238/244 (?) eut Babylas pour successeur; cf.

also laid in his shrine: *The inspired Zebinas died before him* (Maron) *and received the customary rites in the village near him--it is called Cittica. They built a great shrine for his coffin, for he pours forth every kind of healing for those who draw near with faith. He now shares the same roof with martyrs who contended in Persia and are honored by us with annual festivals.*[288] Zebinas was *adorned with hospitality in addition to other good qualities;* (and) *he was also exceedingly admired by the great Maron, who would tell all who visited him to hasten and reap the old man's blessing, naming him father and teacher and calling him the model of every virtue.*[289] There is no doubt that Zebinas was one of the masters of the eremitic life in Cyrrhus. Unfortunately, Theodoret, who praised his asceticism, does not give us much information on his life.[290] We are ignorant of his first steps in the ascetic life, and of the date and circumstances of the foundation of his ascetic school. He pursued his ascetic life during the second half of the fourth century, and perhaps earlier. He was called *the ol man*, and one may therefore suppose that he started his ascetic life during t second or the third quarter of the fourth century.

DISCIPLES

a. Polychronius

Polychronius was a disciple of Zebinas, who imitated his master in everything: *for wax does not receive the impress of signet-rings as much as Polychronius bears the distinctive marks of Zebinas.*[291] Like Zebinas, he was a recluse. The fact that Theodoret built a small cell to warm Polychronius' frozen body does not indicate that Polychronius spent a long period of time as an open-air ascetic.[292] Theodoret probably built a cell for Polychronius out of

Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 115; Downey, *Antioch*, 305. Le nom est attesté comme nom de femme à Zeugma (*IGLS*, I, 94-105) et à Cyrrhus (*ibid.*, 153).'

286 Cittica may be Seih Rih, near Niara in the region of Cyrrhus. Cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 203. Peña, *Reclus*, 286, identifies Cittica with Ikida, 5 km N.E. of Niara.

287 Theodoret never saw Zebinas, who died before his arrival at Cyrrhus in 423. Zebinas died before Maron; one can therefore assume that this happened during the early 410's. Cf. *HR*, XXIV, 2-3; Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 242-243; Festugière, *Antioche*, 304; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 202; Price, *History*, 159.

288 *HR*, XXIV, 2; tr. 155. On the Persian persecution of Christians, cf. Theodoret, *HE*, V/38; regarding the festivals of the martyrs, Festugière, *Antioche*, 304, adds: 'C'est dans le deuxième tiers du Ve siècle que commencent à circuler, semble-t-il, les reliques des martyrs perses (martyrisés sous Sapor II, 344, et ses successeurs). S. Marcel, successeur d'Alexandre l'Acémète, *Ptr. Or.* VI (1911) 654), en fait venir au monastère des Acémètes à Gomon, à l'embouchure du Bosphore dans la Mer Noire, cf. Peeters, *Le Tréfonds*, 150'.

289 *HR*, XXIV, 2; tr. 154-155.

290 Cf. *HR*, XXIV, 1-2.

291 *HR*, XXIV, 3; tr. 155.

292 Festugière, *Antioche*, 305, believes that Polychronius practiced open-air asceticism until Theodoret discouraged him on account of his weak health. As described by Thedodoret, the

concern for his fragile health: *His love of labor has not been confuted by the afflictions of every kind that have fallen upon him; but although beset with varied disease, he perseveres in the same labors. it was with difficulty, and after repeated recourse to many arguments, that we built this small cell, contriving a little warmth for his utterly frozen body.*[293] Polychronius was still alive in 444. His fame extended as far as Antioch.[294]

b. Moses

Moses was not initially a disciple of Zebinas. He came as Polychronius' assistant, to take care of his health, and only later became a true disciple of Zebinas. Theodoret: *I learnt of his* (Polychronius') *all-night vigil in standing posture from the following. Seeing him struggling at the same time with both old age and weakness and not being looked after, I persuaded him by repeated entreaty to take two companions and enjoy solace from them.*[295] *When he asked for two men conspicuous in virtue who lived alone by themselves in another retreat, I persuaded these wonderful men to choose before everything else looking after the man of God. After being with him for a short time, they tried to escape, for they could not endure standing all night.... These men have with time acquired such virtue that they pursue the same philosophy as this great man. Moses--for this is his name--has continued to the present time*[296] *taking every care of his father and master and receiving an accurate impress of this virtue that flashes forth from this godly soul.*[297] This is all we know about Moses' initiation into the ascetic life before he came to serve Polychronius. He was probably from the school of Zebinas and, like his master Polychronius, a recluse. He lived during the fifth century, but the date of his death is unknown, except to say that it occurred after 444.

c. Damian

Damian was one of the two companions who served Polychronius. After spending some time with him, Damian went to Niara,[298] where he lived in the same manner as Polychronius: *Damian--this is the name of the other--repaired to a village lying not far away--its name is Niara. He found a small hut by the*

ascetics' cells were badly constructed and provided inadequate protection during hard winters.

293 *HR*, XXIV, 9; tr. 157. For more details on the life of Polychronius, cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 251-251; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 203-204.

294 Cf. *HR*, XXIV, 7.

295 Cf. the story of Marcianus, who took two disciples, Eusebius and Agapetus, to live with him; cf. *HR*, III, 4.

296 'present time' denotes the period of the composition of the *Historia religiosa*.

297 *HR*, XXIV, 4-5; tr. 155-156.

298 Niara is modern Niara, twelve miles south-east of Cyrrhus, and about three miles northeast of Azaz; cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 252; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 202; Price, *History*, 159; Peña, *Reclus*, 286.

threshing-floor,[299] *and there he lives, pursuing the same way of life, with the result that those with an accurate knowledge of both this man and the other* (Moses) *think on seeing him that they are beholding the soul of the great Polychronius in another body.... Such benefit did he derive from the company of the great Polychronius.*[300] Damian was still alive when Theodoret wrote the *Historia Religiosa*. Like Moses, he joined Zebinas' ascetic school indirectly, by serving Polychronius. Also like Moses, we know nothing of his life before he joined Polychronius, though it may be that his asceticism began under Zebinas.

d. Asclepius

Asclepius belongs to the school of Zebinas in his capacity as a disciple of Polychronius: *Of this company is also the wonderful Asclepius, who is ten stades distant*[301] *but who has keenly embraced the same way of life. He has the same food, dress, modesty of character....*[302] Asclepius was still alive in 444.

e. James

James imitated the virtue of Asclepius: *Many others also have emulated his virtue; not only ours but also the neighboring cities and villages are full of this philosophy. One of these is the most divine James, a recluse in a cell at a village called Nimouza,*[303] *who, though near the very end of life--for he is more than ninety years old--, is a solitary recluse, giving replies, without being seen,*[304] *through a small hole dug slantwise, and neither using fire nor employing lamplight. Twice he has dug through his door and bid me* (Theodoret) *come in,*[305] *thereby honoring me and showing the affection he has for me.*[306] James died after 444 and probably before 450; while Theodoret was writing, James was already *near the very end of life--for he is more than ninety years old--*. In my opinion, James may well be the James who owned Zebinas' *first hair-tunic* and who later sent Zebinas *a goat's hair cloak,*[307] which the latter refused.[308] James

299 Festugière, *Antioche,* 305, believes that Damian was an open-air ascetic during his stay with Polychronius.

300 *HR*, XXIV, 5; tr. 156.

301 Ten stades = one mile. Canivet, *Histoire* II, 155, asserts that this retreat must be located in the plain of Azaz: 'C'est donc encore dans la plaine d'Azaz qu'il faut situer la retraite d'Asclépios, à proximité de Niara et de Kittika'.

302 *HR*, XXV, 1.

303 Nimouza has not been identified with any certainty, cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 253; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 203. Canivet, *Histoire* II, 257, places it in the plain of Azaz. Peña, *Reclus syriens*, 289, tries to identify Nimouza with Mare, though his opinion is not entirely trustworthy as he has never visited these sites.

304 Salamanes (*HR*, XIX, 1) and Acepsimas (*HR*, XV, 1) led similar ascetic lives.

305 Throughout his life, Theodoret had a special relationship with the ascetics.

306 *HR*, XXV, 2; tr. 158.

307 Cf. *HR*, XXIV, 3.

308 Cf. *HR*, XXIV, 9.

lived for a long time, until he was *more than ninety years old.* He could therefore have met Zebinas and trained with him.

28. THALELAEUS

Nor shall I be silent about the story of Thalelaeus; for the spectacle is full of wonder, and not only have I heard the accounts of others but have myself been an eyewitness of the extraordinary spectacle. At twenty stades[309] *from Gabala*[310]*--it is a small and charming city*[311]*--he repaired to a hill on which there was a precinct dedicated to demons and honored with many sacrifices by the impious of old.*[312] *Here he pitched a small hut.*[313] The strange construction of Thalelaeus' cell confirms a degree of freedom in Syrian asceticism and the independence of individual Syrian ascetics. Theodoret continues: *Making two wheels of two cubits in diameter, he joined both wheels together with planks not fitted to each other but separated apart. Then seating himself inside and fixing these separated planks firmly with bolts and nails, he hung the wheel up in the air. Fixing three other tall wooden stakes in the ground and connecting their upper ends with other pieces of wood, he fastened the double wheel in the midst of them and raised it up, the inside of the wheel having a height of two cubits and a breadth of a cubit. Sitting, or rather suspended in this, he has spent ten years up till now. Since he has a very big body, not even sitting can he straighten his neck, but he always sits bent double, with his forehead tightly pressed against his knees.*[314] Thalelaeus, who was a Cilician,[315] converted the inhabitants of his region and so put an end to the reign of demons. He was still alive when Theodoret wrote his life.[316]

309 Two miles.

310 Gabala is Gebele, 30 km south of Lattaquié, cf. Canivet, *Histoire* II, 225. Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 169 gives an interesting summary of the early Christian role of Gabala: 'Gabala (Djeblé, au Sud de Lattaquié). Zoïle assista au concile de Nicée. Domnus se rendit à celui de Constantinople en 381. Sévérien est connu dans l'histoire littéraire et figura parmi les ennemis notoire de saint Jean Chrysostome. Polycarpe prit part au brigandage d'Éphèse, puis au concile de Chalcédoine. Flavien signa l'encyclique. Jean fut au synode de Constantinople en 536, Romain au concile de 553--La Notitia Antiochena fait de l'evêque de Gabala le troisième syncelle d'Antioche. Gabala fut endommagée par un tremblement de terre en 475'.

311 Peña, *Reclus*, 75, identifies Thalelaeus' retreat as Jabboul or Gaboula, 35 km east of Aleppo.

312 Maron, *HR*, XVI, 1, 'also repaired to a hilltop formerly honored by the impious...', tr. 117. The fight against demons who dwelt in pagan temples was an important factor in the Christianisation of pagan sanctuaries; cf. *HR*, XXVIII, 5.

313 *HR*, XXVIII, 1; tr. 180.

314 *HR*, XXVIII, 3; tr. 181. The cell of Thalelaeus resembles that of Baradatus, cf. *HR*, XXVII, 2.

315 *HR*, XXVIII, 4.

316 Cf. *HR*, XXVIII, 5.

B. THE OPEN-AIR LIFE

Open-air asceticism originated as a development of the eremitic ascetic life involving extreme forms of mortification. This kind of asceticism was practised by ascetics other than Maron and his disciples:

In winter and summer some endure
the burden of diverse adversities:
In wintertime the cold and frost,
in summertime the fiery heat.
One resolves in himself
to seek no place of shelter,
And unto every climatic harshness
he surrenders himself with valour.[317]

Chrysostom agrees that many ascetics pursued such a life: *And many of them do this, not being even under shelter, but for a roof they have heaven, and t moon instead of the light of a candle, not wanting oil, nor one to attend to it; them alone does it shine worthily from on high.*[318] There can be no doubt th open-air asceticism was practised outside the region of Cyrrhus and that i predated Maron.

1. JACOB (JAMES) OF NISIBIS

James of Nisibis who died in 337/8,[319] spent the greater part of his ascetic life in the open-air: *In spring, summer, and autumn he used the thickets, with the sky for roof; in the winter season a cave received him and provided scanty shelter.*[320]

2. ADOLIUS

Adolius belongs only indirectly in this study of the Syrian ascetics. It is important, however, to mention his open-air asceticism, because he practised it before Maron of Cyrrhus. Palladius[321] relates: *I also knew Adolius at Jerusalem. He was a Tarsian by birth who had come to Jerusalem by an altogether different way, not at all by the way we traveled, but cut out for himself a strange way of life..., the big thing he did was this: from the time of evening until the brotherhood gathered again it its house of prayer,*[322] *he would stand on the*

317 Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, Syr. 24-25; tr. 474.
318 Chrysostom, *Matt.* LXIX, 3; tr. 425.
319 On his life, cf. pp. 322-324.
320 *HR*, I, 2; tr. 13.
321 Palladius met Adolius during his monastic training on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem (c. 388); cf. Meyer, *Palladius*, 5.
322 According to Palladius, the brothers were in the habit of waking before dawn; cf. Palladius, 43, 3.

Mount of Olives, on the Hill of Ascension, the place where Jesus was taken up. There he would stand, singing psalms and praying and even if it snowed or rained, or there was a frost, he would remain there unshaken.[323]

3. GADDANES

I knew an old Palestinian, Gaddanes by name, who lived his life with no roof over his head in the vicinity of the Jordan.[324] Gaddanes lived during the fourth century and perhaps on into the early fifth.[325] Two writers, Sozomen and Palladius, speak of Gaddanes, and it may be that they are referring to two different people. Sozomen speaks of *Gaddanas and Azizus who dwelt with Aones, and emulated his virtues*; they lived *in the neighborhood of Edessa and its adjacent regions.*[326] Sozomen refers to this Gaddanes as one of the monks of Edessa. The Gaddanes who appears in the writings of Palladius was from Palestine and lived in the vicinity of the Jordan. Did the Palestinian Gaddanes move to Edessa to live with Aones, thus becoming Sozomen's monk of Edessa? The question is difficult to answer. It could be that Gaddanes of Edessa and Gaddanes of Palestine were different people.[327] Fortunately, for our purpose no answer is required. We mention Palladius' life of Gaddanes simply for the information it yields concerning the open-air ascetic life.

4. MARON

Maron took up the open-air life in the region of Cyrrhus, probably on Parsa Dag: *After him I shall recall Maron, for he too adorned the godly choir of the saints. Embracing the open-air life, he repaired to a hill-top*[328] *formerly honored by the impious.*[329] *Consecrating*[330] *to God the precinct of demons on it, he lived there, pitching a small tent which he seldom used.*[331] According to Theodoret, Maron was the founder of the open-air life[332] in the region of

323 Palladius, 43, 1-2; the translation is from Meyer, *Palladius,* 119-120. Gregory Nazianzus, *PG*, XXXVII, 1457, testifies to the existence of a second ascetic in Jerusalem who led a life very similar to that of Adolius. Delehaye, *Les saints stylites,* CLXXXII, wonders whether Gregory's ascetic can be identified with Adolius because they were both living on the Mount of Olives at the same time.

324 Palladius, 50; tr. 132.

325 This was the period of Palladius, who knew Gaddanes personally.

326 Sozomen, *HE*, VI, 34; tr. 370.

327 Meyer, *Palladius,* 209 (50) says: 'Sozomen, *HE,* VI, 34, mentions a Gaddanes who lived with Azizus and Aones; the source there was in all probability a Syriac original'.

328 Now identified by Canivet, *Monachisme,* 199-200, as Parsa Dag; it is not Qal'at Kolota, as Peña believed (*Reclus syriens,* 34). Cf. Price, *History,* 119, who rejects Peña.

329 Thalelaeus used a similar place for his cell, *HR*, XXVIII, 1.

330 On the word 'consecrating', Canivet, *Histoire* II, 29, notes that the Greek term does not mean the consecration of a Church, but only that Maron devoted a place to God. Cf. also Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische,* 245.

331 *HR*, XVI, 1; tr. 117.

332 A life led either in an enclosure without a roof, or completely unprotected in the open-air. Cf.

Cyrrhus: *Applying this mode of cultivation, he produced many plants of philosophy, and it was he who planted for God the garden that now flourishes in the region of Cyrrhus.*[333] On another point, Theodoret is not clear: *it was he* (Maron) *who planted for God the garden that now flourishes in the region of Cyrrhus*. Maron was not the only spiritual master of Cyrrhus and certainly not the first ascetic in this region. One must assume that Theodoret attributes only the founding of the open-air life in this region to Maron. More generally, the reclusive life predates Maron's foundation.

The name Maron, however, which could be a nickname given to the holy man by his disciples, probably indicates the important role played by Maron in Cyrrhus. Etymologically, 'Maron' is connected with *Marya*, meaning 'Lord'. In addition to Theodoret's life of Maron, the Maronite tradition claims a second source; this is a letter from John Chrysostom to *Maron, monk and priest. We are bound to you by love and interior disposition, and see you here before us as if you were actually present. For such are the eyes of love; their vision is neithe interrupted by distance nor dimmed by time. We wished to write more frequen to your reverence, but since this is not easy on account of the difficulty of road and the problems to which travellers are subject, whenever opportun allows we address ourselves to your honour and assure you that we hold yo constantly in our mind and carry you about in our soul wherever we may be. And take care yourself that you write to us as often as you can, telling us how you are, so that although separated physically we might be cheered by learning constantly about your health and receive much consolation as we sit in solitude. For it brings us no small joy to hear about your health. And above all please pray for us.*[334] Unfortunately, it is very doubtful indeed whether this letter actually concerns the Maron described by Theodoret. When a hermit was also a priest, Theodoret normally mentions that fact specifically. Yet he does not say that Maron was a priest.[335] Moreover, Chrysostom was apparently on close terms with the Maron of his letter; they may have met while Chrysostom was training with Syrian hermits in Antioch. There is no indication that John Chrysostom knew the monks of Cyrrhus.[336]

Maron was a great admirer of Zebinas: *He* (Zebinas) *was also exceedingly admired by the great Maron, who would tell all who visited him to hasten and reap the old man's blessing, naming him father and teacher and calling him the*

Festugière, *Antioche*, 395; Canivet, *Histoire* II, 29.

333 *HR*, XVI, 3; tr. 118.

334 *PG*, t. LII, col. 630; the translation is by N. Russell and was made specially for this work.

335 Maronite tradition argues that Theodoret's Maron was a priest because he 'consecrated' a pagan temple to Christ, cf. Dau, *History of the Maronites* I (in Arabic), 77. As has been noted, the word does not necessarily have a priestly connotation; cf. Canivet, *Histoire* II, 29.

336 Canivet, *Monachisme*, 199, argues that the letter was not written to Theodoret's Maron.

model of every virtue. He even asked to share his grave: but this was disallowed by those who seized his sacred body and carried it off to the place mentioned above.[337] *Naming him father and teacher and calling him the model of every virtue* may indicate that Zebinas trained Maron in the ascetic life.[338] Theodoret's vagueness does not allow one to form any definitive judgement. The titles 'father, teacher, and model of virtue' do not always indicate a master-disciple relationship between the bearer of these titles and their bestower. Regarding Zebinas and Maron, Theodoret is not clear on this point, though that is not unusual. He is often vague about the mentors of the Syrian hermits. Maron could have been an admirer of Zebinas, without having been his disciple. What is certain is that Zebinas and Maron were the two masters of the ascetic life in Cyrrhus, and they may well have been the originators of the eremitic life in this region.

Maron died sometime before 423, having pursued a life of harsh mortification, during which he healed many people of their physical and spiritual sicknesses.[339] In 444, Theodoret noted that James, the disciple of Maron, had already spent 38 years in the ascetic life, which would seem to confirm that Maron was still alive in 406 when James became his pupil.[340] We know that he died before 423 because Theodoret never met him; he gathered his information from those of his disciples who were still alive.[341] Conflict arose over Maron's body, which was probably buried in Brad: *A bitter war over his body arose between his neighbors.*[342] *One of the adjacent villages that was well-populated came out in mass, drove off the others and seized this thrice-desired treasure;*[343] *building a great shrine, they reap benefit therefrom even to this day, honoring*

337 *HR*, XXIV, 2; tr. 155.

338 Price, *History*, 119, believes that Maron was a disciple of Zebinas.

339 Cf. *HR*, XVI.

340 Cf. *HR*, XXII, 7.

341 Cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 199; Price, *History*, 1191.

342 Delehaye, *Saints stylites*, CLXXXVII, regards this struggle as the first of its kind in the Christian Church: 'C'est en Syrie que l'on signale les premières batailles pour s'assurer la possession d'un corps saint. Celui de S. Maron fut enlevé de vive force; et sans l'intervention des soldats, sous la conduite d'Ardaburius, le corps du grand Syméon eût été dérobé. On n'attend pas la mort du solitaire Jacques pour prendre les mesures nécessaires en vue de la possession de son corps....' Cf. *HR*, X, 8; XVII, 10; XIX, 3; XXI, 9; Festugière, *Antioche*, 374.

343 Dau, *History of the Maronites*, 166ff. identifies this place as Brad: 'St. Maron lived in Kefar-Nebo, the nearest and most populous village in regard to Kefar-Nabo is Brad, Kapro Barad of the Byzantine era. This was indeed a large and populous city in the fifth century, as it was also the metropolis of Mount Nabo and the surrounding area, and has common borders with Kefar-Nebo. Its principal Church is the largest in that region; it is 42 metres long and 22 metres wide. Theodoret calls it a magnificent Church. It was built in the first years of the fifth century, the period in which St Maron died. Adjoining the Church is a chapel containing a sarcophagus in which was buried a holy and distinguished priest, St Maron'.

this victor with a public festival.[344] Maron is considered by the Maronites to be the spiritual father of their Church because his disciples are believed to have laid its historical foundations.[345]

5. EUSEBIUS OF ASIKHA

To the saints described above I shall add the great Eusebius, who died a short time ago.[346] *During a lifespan of very many years he endured labor equal to this time, accumulated virtue equal to this labor, and carried off therefrom a profit many times greater, for the Umpire surpasses the contests in the munificence of his gifts in return. Entrusting the care of himself at first to others, he followed where they led,for they too were men of God, athletes and gymnasts of virtue. After passing time with them, and well and truly acquiring knowledge of philosophy, he embraced the solitary life. Repairing to a mountain ridge--adjacent to it is a large village which they call Asikha*[347] *--and using a mere enclosure whose stones he did not even join together with clay, he continued for the rest of his life to endure the hardship of the open air.... Frozen in winter and burnt in summer, he bore with endurance the contrastin temperatures of the air....*[348] Eusebius' reclusive life was disturbed ' visitors,[349] who caused him to move to another location: *Using again a sm enclosure at the angle of the wall,*[350] *he pursued the contest by means of h usual labors.*[351] Eusebius, who lived *more than ninety years,* died some time before 444.[352] Theodoret, who knew him personally,[353] does not say that Eusebius was a disciple of Maron, but only a devotee of open-air asceticism.

344 *HR*, XVI, 4; tr. 118.

345 Cf. Naaman, *Monastère de Bet Maron*. The monastery of *Bet Maroun* was built in 452; in 444 Theodoret says that the open-air life was flourishing (cf. *HR*, XXII, 7; XXIII; XXVII). Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 243 believes that Maronite historians wrongly attributed the founding of this monastery to the disciples of Maron; the latter lived in Cyrrhus, not in Emesa. Canivet, *Histoire* II, 28 and Moosa, *The Maronites*, 12-14 share Schiwietz's doubts.

346 'A short time ago', indicates a few years before 444, the date of the *Historia Religiosa*.

347 Dussaud, *Topographie*, 471, identifies this village as Sakttshé Geuzu, 45 km N. of Cyrrhus. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 195, does not accept this. Peña, *Reclus syrien*, 287, argues that Asikhas has not yet been identified.

348 *HR*, XVIII; tr. 126.

349 Cf. *HR*, XVIII, 2-3.

350 The towers attached to monasteries were very often used by recluses, cf. Peña, *Reclus*, 165-254ff.

351 *HR*, XVIII, 3; tr. 127.

352 Cf. *HR*, XVIII, 4.

353 Cf. *HR*, XVIII, 2, 4.

6. JAMES OF CYRRHESTICA

James of Cyrrhestica was, according to Theodoret, the most famous disciple of Maron. He started his ascetic life very early in the fifth century. In 406, he took up open-air asceticism under the direction of Maron: *A companion of the great Maron and a recipient of his divine teaching, he has eclipsed his teacher by greater labors. For Maron had a precinct of the ancient imposture as enclosure, pitched a tent of hairy skins, and used this to ward off the assaults of rain and snow. But this man* (James), *bidding farewell to all these things, tent and hut and enclosure, has sky for roof, and lets in all the contrasting assaults of the air, as he is now inundated by torrential rain, now frozen by frost and snow, at other times burnt and consumed by the rays of the sun, and exercises endurance over everything.*[354] He had already spent some time as a recluse: *it was by earlier immuring himself in a small cell, freeing his soul from the tumults outside and nailing his mind to the thought of God that he engaged in the rehearsal of complete virtue.*[355] James probably lived in Sheikh Phares in the nountain of Sheikh Khoros.[356]

James did not remain with Maron for long; after completing his training, he moved to a neighbouring mountain: *After training himself perfectly and accustoming his soul to excellent labors, he dared greater contests. Repairing to that mountain which is thirty stades*[357] *distant from this town, he has made it distinguished and revered, although formerly it was totally undistinguished and sterile.*[358] James' endurance was extraordinary: *Often after snow has fallen for three days and as many nights, he has been so buried, when lying prone in prayer to God, that not even a tiny piece of the rags that cover him can be seen. Often his neighbors have to use forks and shovels and in this way remove the snow covering him, in order to drag out and revive his supine body.*[359] In Cyrrhus, James was not only the leader of those who pursued the open-air life of Maron, he was the head of all the ascetics who were still living during Theodoret's episcopate: *At the head of these* (living ascetics) *I* (Theodoret) *shall place the great James, for he has precedence over the others both in time and in labor, and it is by emulating him that his emulators do wondrous and*

354 *HR*, XXI, 3; tr. 134.

355 *HR*, XXI, 4; tr. 134.

356 'Si l'on examine la carte au 1/50.000, on s'aperçoit qu'à 5 ou 6 km de Cyrrhus, c'est vers l'Ouest qu'on trouve une montagne d'altitude remarquable, le Seih Khoros (765 m au plus haut sommet) qui a donné son nom à trois petits villages. En revanche, à 1 km environ vers le Sud... il y a une colline et sur cette colline un ziara abandonnée et détruite depuis quelques années.', Canivet, *Monachisme*, 201; Honigmann, *Patristic Studies*, 98-100, also suggested Sheikh Khoros as the place of James' retreat.

357 5.4 km.

358 *HR*, XXI, 4; tr. 134.

359 *HR*, XXI, 13; tr. 138.

extraordinary things.[360] Whereas Theodoret's life of Maron is very brief, his life of James is detailed. He seems to prefer the disciple to the master. According to Theodoret, James eclipsed his master. He was the first, *in time and labor,* to lead spend his life entirely in open air, with no form of shelter whatsoever. James of Cyrrhestica was an influential figure in Cyrrhus.[361] In 444, when Theodoret wrote his life, he was still alive, and had already spent *thirty-eight years* in the open air.[362] In 457, along with Baradatus and Symeon, James was consulted by the emperor, Leo I, concerning the Council of Chalcedon (451).[363]

7. LIMNAEUS

Limnaeus started his ascetic life while he was still young, soon adopting a life of silence under the direction of Thalassius in Tillima: *In his* (Thalassius') *choir was enrolled Limnaeus, now celebrated by all. At a very young age*[364] *he entered this wrestling-school and received a fine education in this consummate philosophy. At first, knowing the treachery of the tongue, he imposed on it a rule of silence while still an adolescent, and continued for as long as possible sayin nothing to anyone.*[365] Later (c. 406), he went to Maron to be trained in t open-air life:[366] *When he had received sufficiently the teaching of the godly man* (Thalassius) *and made himself an impress of his virtue, he came to the gre Maron, whom we recalled above--he came at the same time as the godl James.*[367] Like many disciples, Limnaeus did not stay with his mentor, here Maron, until the latter's death, but went to pursue the open-air life independently: *After reaping much benefit from there again* (from Maron), *and keenly embracing the open-air life, he repaired to another hill-top, lying above a village called Targalla.*[368] There, on the hilltop of Targalla, Limnaeus struggled against the harshness of the weather: *Here he has continued till today,*[369] *without a cell or tent or hut, but fenced round by a bare wall built of stones and not joined with clay. It has a small door always sealed with mud, which he never opens to other visitors, but allows me* (Theodoret) *alone to open when I visit him.*[370] In view of the fact that the early period of his ascetic life was spent with

360 *HR*, XXI, 2; tr. 133.
361 Cf. *HR*, XXI, 15 ff.
362 *HR*, XXII, 7.
363 Cf. Schwartz, *ACO*, II, 5, 23.
364 It could be between 14 and 18 years old.
365 *HR*, XXII, 2; tr. 150.
366 In 444, Theodoret says that James and Limnaeus had 'already completed their thirty-eighth year' in the open-air life. On this reckoning, Limnaeus must have gone to Maron in 406. Cf. *HR* XXII, 7.
367 *HR*, XXII, 2; tr. 150.
368 *HR*, XXII, 3; tr. 151. Targala, near Cyrrhus, has not been identified, cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 195 and Peña, *Reclus*, 228.
369 I.e. 444.
370 *HR*, XXII, 3; tr. 151.

Maron, Limnaeus must taken up asceticism during the latter part of the fourth century. Clearly, he was still alive when Theodoret wrote the *Historia Religiosa.*[371] Theodoret, who knew him personally, relates that Limnaeus had the gifts of healing and hospitality.[372]

8. JOHN

John started his life of open-air asceticism in 419, and was still alive in 444: *John too has keenly embraced this mode of life, a man conspicuous, in addition to other virtues, for gentleness and kindness. Repairing to a jagged ridge,*[373] *prone to storms and northward-facing, he has now spent twenty-five years there,*[374] *exposed to the contrasting assaults of the atmosphere.*[375]

9 MOSES

Moses embraced the open-air life in Rama:[376] *This life has also been embraced by Moses, who contends on a high hill-top surmounting the village of Rama.*[377] He was still alive in 444.

10. ANTIOCHUS

Antiochus embraced the open-air life and was still alive in 444: *Antiochus, an elderly man who has built an enclosure on a quite uninhabited mountain....*[378]

11. ANTONIUS

Antonius was of the school of Maron, pursuing a life of open-air asceticism in the region of Cyrrhus: *Antoninus, who in an aged body contends just as youths do.*[379] We know that he died after 444.[380]

12. MARANA AND CYRA

Marana and Cyra, who lived in Beroea, took up the open-air life in 402. They constructed a small dwelling for their servants who wished to imitate them: *At this point I shall treat of Marana and Cyra, who have defeated all the others in the contests of endurance. Their fatherland was Beroea, their stock the glory of their fatherland, and their upbringing appropriate for their stock. But despising all these, they acquired a small place in front of the town, and entering within it, walled up the door with clay and stones. For their maidservants who were eager to share this life with them they built a small dwelling outside this enclosure, and*

371 Cf. *HR* XXII, 7.
372 Cf. *HR*, XXII, 3-7.
373 This place has not been identified.
374 I.e., he started in 419.
375 *HR*, XXIII, 1.
376 This village has not been identified.
377 *HR*, XXIII, 2; tr. 152.
378 *HR*, XXIII, 2; tr. 152. The place of his retreat has not been identified.
379 *HR*, XXIII, 2; tr. 152.
380 Cf. *HR*, XXIII, 2

in this they told them to live. Through a small window they keep a watch on what they are doing, and repeatedly rouse them to prayer and inflame them with divine love. They themselves, with neither house nor hut, embrace the open-air life. In place of a door a small window has been constructed for them, through which they take in the food they need and talk with the women who come to see them.[381] Theodoret adds that, on account of their constant contemplation of the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, *in suffering the assaults of rain and snow and sun they feel neither pain nor distress but from apparent afflictions reap joy of heart.*[382] Marana and Cyra hold a special place in the *Historia Religiosa.* Along with Domnina and Mary the niece of Abraham Qidunaya, they are the only ascetic women mentioned in the history of Syrian eremitism before Chalcedon (451). They were regarded as objects of respect by all.[383] The names of Marana, Cyra, and Domnina, may be, as it were, honorary titles, indicating their high spiritual level status.[384] Theodoret, who knew Marana and Cyra, notes that in 444 they had already spent *forty-two* years living in the open air.[385]

13. DOMNINA

Emulating the life of the inspired Maron, whom we recalled above, th wonderful Domnina set up a small hut in the garden of her mother's house; he hut is made of millet stalks. Passing the whole day there, she wets with incessant tears not only her cheeks but also her garments of hair, for such is the clothing with which she covers her body.[386] Domnina, who lived in the southern part of the region of Cyrrhus,[387] founded an important ascetic community for women.[388] She was still alive when the *Historia Religiosa* was composed.

14. BARADATUS

Baradatus, who came from the region of Antioch, practised another variation of the life of mortification. This was half-way between the life of the recluse and that of the open-air ascetic.[389] Evidently, Baradatus developed his own eremitic

381 *HR*, XXIX, 2-3; tr. 183-184.

382 *HR*, XXIX, 6; tr. 184.

383 Cf. *HR*, XXIX, 2, 7.

384 'Les noms araméen et grec de Marana et Cyra designent sans doute, comme les noms latins Domna, Domnina, le respect dont le peuple entourait ces femmes dans la cité de Bérée, où Araméens et Hellènes étaient mêlés et où elles étaient connues: selon l'habitude des biographes, Théodoret ne manque pas d'associer la vertu et la noblesse', Canivet, *Histoire* II, 233.

385 Cf. *HR*, XXIX, 6. 5.

386 *HR*, XXX, 1; tr. 186.

387 Cf. *HR*, XXX, 3.

388 Cf. *HR* XXX, 4.

389 Some Maronite scholars regard Baradatus as a disciple of Maron and so as an open-air hermit, cf. Dau, *History of the Maronites* (in Arabic), 124-125, and Matar, *The Disciples of St Maroun* (in Arabic), 77-79. This claim cannot be substantiated because there is nothing in

practices, a fact which shows once more the individualistic character of Syrian eremitism. It was the freedom enjoyed by the hermits that shaped the many different forms and practises that existed: *I am obliged* (relates Theodoret) *at the present juncture to proceed through each of these, for I wish to second the life of the wonderful Baradatus; for he too has devised new tests of endurance. First, immuring himself for a long time in a cell, he enjoyed divine consolation alone. From there repairing to the ridge situated above, and constructing out of wood a small chest that did not even match his body, in this he dwelt, obliged to stoop the whole time - for its length was not equal in size to the height of his body. It was not even fitted together with planks, but had openings like a lattice, and was similar to windows that have rather broad openings for the light; because of this he was neither safe from the assault of the rains nor free from the flames of the sun, but endured both of them like the other open-air ascetics, whom he surpassed only in the labor of reclusion.*[390] Baradatus did not spend the whole of his life in seclusion.

Theodotus, the bishop of Antioch, obliged him to renounce his severe mortifications.[391] He promptly adopted another strange ascetic practice: *Having spent a long time in this way, he later came out, yielding to the instances of the inspired Theodotus, who had been appointed to the episcopal see of Antioch. However, he stands all the time, stretching out his hands and hymning the God of the universe, and covering his entire body with a tunic of skins - only round the nose and mouth has he left a small opening for breath, since otherwise human nature cannot live. He endures all this labor, even though with a body not robust but much afflicted by numerous ailments; but his bubbling zeal, inflamed by divine love, compels to labor one who cannot labor.*[392] Baradatus was *adorned in mind with understanding, he is excellent* (relates Theodoret) *at composing questions and answers; he sometimes syllogizes better and more powerfully than those well versed in the Labyrinths of Aristotle.*[393] The date of his death is still unknown, though it must have been after 457, when, along with

Theodoret to indicate that Baradatus was a disciple of Maron. He lived in Antioch, not Cyrrchus and his open-air life is quite distinct from that of Maron and his followers.

390 *HR*, XXVII, 2; tr. 178.

391 'Théodoret souligne le contrôle exercé par l'épiscopat sur les anachorètes (*MST*, 230). Théodote, successeur d'Alexandre (*MST*, 116, n. 54) en 420/421, dut mourir en 429 (Downey, *Antioch*, 458; Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 117, compte trop étroitement de 424 à 428). L'*HE* de Théodoret souligne la douceur et la rigueur de son caractère (V, 38, 1, p. 342, 6-7): il lui a adressé l'*Ep.* XXXII (*SC* 40, p. 98) et l'*Ep.* XLV (p. 109 s.), dans laquelle il se confond excuses pour avoir manqué de le rencontrer au cours d'une tourneé episcopale; dans ses *Ep.* 80, 83 (*SC* 98, p. 194, 13 et p. 208, 10) et 113 (*SC* 111, p. 62, 12), il rappelle qu'il n'a jamais encouru de blame de sa part pour ses predications', Canivet, *Histoire* II, 221.

392 *HR*, XXVII, 3; tr. 178.

393 *HR*, XXVII, 4; tr. 178; cf. Price, *History*, 179.

James of Cyrrhestica and Symeon the Stylite, he was consulted by Leo I over the controversial Chalcedonian Definition of 451.[394]

15. ABBA

Abba started his ascetic life in 406. As part of his ascetic pursuits, spent a period of time each day in the open air: *during frost he sits in the shade, in flaming heat he takes the sun and welcomes its flames as if it were a westerly breeze.*[395]

16. THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERS OF OPEN-AIR ASCETICISM

I would like to note some characteristic elements of the open-air life which distinguish this school from other ascetic schools in the Syrian Church.

a. The open-air life was a radical form of asceticism. It was a struggle between man and his human nature which aims to dominate him through his passions. In pursuing such a life, a hermit demonstrated his mastery over hum nature by the complete subjugation of his body. This total control was achie despite the harshness of nature and without bodily protection, even during wi and summer.

b. The open-air life also represented the complete rejection of all barriers between man and nature. The two should maintain a harmony, despite the fragility of the human body. In this sense, the open-air life was regarded as a return to the condition of Adam and Even in Paradise. They lived in harmony with God and nature and needed no shelter.[396]

c. It is well known that, during autumn and spring, the weather in the Syrian Orient is clement and relatively conducive to an open-air existence. Winter and summer, by contrast, are very harsh. At these times the open-air existence is so dangerous that it could easily be the cause of death.

d. Open-air asceticism was not limited to the Syrian hermits. More recently, for example, a Russian ascetic, St. Seraphim of Sarov (+1831) who was influenced by Symeon the Stylite, spent one thousand days in the open-air, practising asceticism in all wethers.[397] Friends who have visited the hermits of Mount Athos in Greece inform me that some hermits there still practise open-air asceticism for part of the year.

e. Symeon's life on the column is described as being like that of *a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the*

394 Cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 420; Price, *History*, 179.

395 *HR*, IV, 12; tr. 55.

396 In Genesis 2 there is nothing to suggest that Adam and Eve had any form of shelter. Their life in Eden was a major theme for meditation in early Syrian asceticism.

397 Cf. Gorainoff, *Séraphim de Sarov*, 41-42; Iulia de Beausobre, *Flame in the Snow*.

winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.[398] Moreover, according to Theodoret, Symeon adhered to his way of life because *he yearns to fly up to heaven and to be separated from this life on earth.*[399] Syrian ascetics had a very radical interpretation of the Bible and especially of the New Testament. They tried to apply the sacred words literally in their own lives.

C. STYLITISM

1. SYMEON THE STYLITE

There are three major sources for the life of Symeon the Stylite. Theodoret wrote a life of Symeon which is reliable and historically accurate.[400] It was probably written between 440 and 443.[401] The second text is *The Antony Life.*[402] This suffers from a number of historical inaccuracies which suggest that t could be a late text written by a follower of Symeon who did not have irsthand information.[403] This life was known primarily through a Latin ranslation;[404] the original Greek text only became known later.[405] The third text is known as *the Syriac life.* It is more detailed than both of the other texts and more accurate than *The Antony Life.*[406] Most scholars consider the *Syriac Life* to be more reliable than Theodoret because its authors were disciples of Symeon who were in direct contact with him.[407] It would seem that the *Syriac*

398 *Mt.* 7, 24-25; cf. *Syriac Life*, 576/18-577/8; tr. 155.

399 *HR*, XXVI, 12; tr. 165.

400 *HR*, XXVI; translated into French by Canivet and Leroy-Molinghen, *Sources chrétiennes*, no. 257, 158-215, and by Festugière in *Antioche*, 387-401. There is an English translation by Price, *History*, 160-176. For a discussion see Delehaye, *Saints stylites*, IX-XVII; Festugière, *Antioche*, 348-357; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 109.

401 Cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 348; Delehaye, *Saint stylites*, xvii; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 33-34.

402 The *Antony Life* has been translated into French, Coptic and English: French translation by Festugière, *Antioche*, 493-506; (Referred to in the present work.) Coptic translation in *Ms. Vat. Copt.* 61, fol. 1aff; English translation by Doran, *The Lives of Simeon Stylites*.

403 Cf. Peeters, *Tréfonds orientale*, 107; Festugière, *Antioche*, 385ff, Lietzmann, *Das Leben*, 221ff, Jerphanion, *Les inscriptions*, 340ff, Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 319; and Brock, 'Early Syrian Asceticism', 13; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 211; cf. Delehaye, *Stylites*, V.

404 Cf. *Acta Sanctorum*, 'Vita Simeonis', Janvier, 269-274; cf. also *Patrologia Latinae*, t. 73, cols. 325-334.

405 The Greek text has been edited by Lietzmann, *Das Leben*, 20-78, from nine manuscripts, taking that of Paris (gr. 1468, XIe s) as its basis. For details, cf. Lietzmann, *Das Leben*, 207-212; Jerphanion, *Les inscriptions cappadociennes*, 340-360; Festugière, *Antioche*, 347; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 210; Ehrhard, *Überlieferung*, 164-169, 249.

406 Cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 357.

407 Cf. Lietzmann, *Das Leben*, 238-254; Peeters, *Tréfonds*, 112-136 = 'S. Syméon stylite', 48-71; Delehaye, *Stylites*, V-VIII, XXXIV; Lent, 'The Life of St. Simeon', 103-110; Price, *History*, 173; Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 315ff.

Life was written shortly after Simeon's death in 459 AD.[408] It is preserved in several manuscripts, of which: Vatican *Ms. Syr.* 117 was published by Assemani;[409] two manuscripts from the British Museum, *Add.* 14484, which is thought to be the oldest of the three, and *Add.* 12174 were used by Bedjan.[410] Bedjan published the text of *Add.* 14484 in his *Acta Martyrum* (IV, 507-644). Subsequent scholars have normally considered Bedjan's text to be the best.[411] There is another manuscript in Damascus: *Dam. Patr.* 12/17 of 12.[412] Four letters survive which are ascribed to Symeon the Stylite: a letter addressed to the Emperor Leon; a letter to Jacob of Kafra Rehima; a letter to Jacob of Antioch; and a letter from Alexander of Mabbug and Andrew of Samosota to John of Antioch and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, concerning Symeon and Jacob of Kafra Rehima.[413] But there is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that these letters were actually written by Symeon the Stylite. They appear to have been composed as part of the dogmatic controversy surrounding the council of Chalcedon, probably by dogmatists trying to strengthen their position by usin Symeon's name.[414] Symeon is mentioned in a number of other text Evagrius,[415] the Life of St. Theodosius (+529), the Life of St. Auxentius (c 470), the Life of St. Genovièvе (c. 500), the Life of St. Euthymius (+479)[41c] These are not of great importance, however, because they are all late texts.

Symeon was born somewhere between 386 and 390, the exact date is not known.[417] His childhood is related in some detail in the *Syriac life: This glorious man, then, came from the region of Nicopolis, and the name of his town was Sis.*[418] *Now he had Christian parents who gave him baptism when he was*

408 Cf. Lent, 'The Life of S. Simeon', 103, 110. Lietzmann, *Das Leben*, 184-188.

409 *Acta Sanctorum* II, 273-394.

410 *Acta Martyrum*, IV, xi-xiv.

411 Cf. Lent, 'The Life', 103-110; Delehaye, *Stylites*, V-VI; Nöldeke, *Sketches*, 225ff. Peeters, *Tréfonds*, 112ff. Wright, (cat.) dates add 14484 to the sixth century; 12174 is dated October 1196.

412 For some comments on the two early Syriac mss. (Vat. and Br. L.) cf. Doran, 'Comments', 35-48; Vööbus, 'Discovery', 479-484. The *Syriac Life* has been translated into English by Lent, *The Life of S. Simeon*, 111-198; (referred to in this study). It was translated into German by H. Hilgenfeld, in Lietzmann, *Das Leben*, 80-180. For a study of the life, see Festugière, *Antioche*, 357-370. A new English translation by R. Doran is forthcoming.

413 Cf. Torrey, 'Letters of Simeon the Stylite'; Lietzmann, *Das Leben*, 188-196; Wright, *Syriac Literature*, 55-56; Delehaye, *Stylites*, XXI-XXII; Festugière, *Antioche*, 418-423.

414 Cf. Delehaye, *Stylites*, XXII-XXIV; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 178-180.

415 *HE.* I, 13-14; II, 10.

416 Cf. Lietzmann, *Das Leben*, 223-228; Delehaye, *Stylites*, XXII-XXI.

417 Cf. Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 321, who argues for 386; Lietzmann, *Das Leben*, 238, who argues for 390; and Delehaye, *Stylites*, XXIV: 'Syméon naquit vers 389'. Leclerq, 'Stylites', 1697 agrees with Delehaye. Thurston, 'Simeon Stylites the Elder', 795, gives a date of 'about 388'.

418 See Lietzmann, *Das Leben*, and Festugière, *Antioche*, 388: 'La vie syriaque précise: 'dans la

small. He had a brother whose name was Mar Shemshi, and they alone remained to their parents of the many children whom they had had. This blessed one from his boyhood loved to shepherd the flocks of his parents, and he practised himself in toil, weariness and exhaustion.[419] *Once when there was much snow and the sheep were compelled to stay indoors, he took advantage of the respite to go with his parents to the house of God. I heard his sacred tongue recount the following: he told how he heard the Gospel utterance which declares blessed those who weep and mourn, calls wretched those who laugh,*[420] *terms enviable those who possess a pure soul, and all the other blessings conjoined with them. He then asked one of those present what one should do to obtain each of these. He suggested the solitary life and pointed to that consummate philosophy.*[421]

It is reported that Symeon was prompted to take up a life of austerity after he experienced a vision; thereafter he spent many years as a disciple, training in the ascetic life in various places.[422] Eventually, he inaugurated the stylite life and became the most famous figure among all the ascetics of the Christian Church: *The famous Symeon, the great wonder of the world, is known of by all the subjects of the Roman empire and has also been heard of by the Persians,the Medes, the Ethiopians; and the rapid spread of his fame as far as the nomadic Scythians has taught his love of labor and his philosophy. I myself, though having all men, so to speak, as witness of his contests that beggar description, am afraid that the narrative may seem to posterity to be a myth totally devoid of truth. For the facts surpass human nature, and men are wont to use nature to measure what is said; if anything is said that lies beyond the limits of nature, the account is judged to be false by those uninitiated into divine things.*[423]

région de Nicopolis'. Nicopolis est l'actuelle Islahiyé, au N.-O. de Cyrrhus, à 25 km, environ de Meiden Ekbès: 'aux confins de notre pays' est exacte de la Syrie, mais le serait particulièrement de la Cyrrhestique. Cette ville, à l'époque byzantine, faisait partie de l'Euphratésie, était le siège d'un évêché et d'une circonscription administrative.' Cf. also Devreesse, *Patriarcat*, 283.

419 *Syriac Life*, 508 (6-13); references are to Bedjan's edition. References to the translation will be indicated by the abbreviation, 'tr.' This passage from *Syriac Life* can be compared with *HR*, XXVI, 2, tr. 160-161, and *Antony Life*, 2, tr. 493.

420 *Lk.* 6, 21, 25.

421 *HR*, XXVI, 2, tr. 160-161. The three sources diverge at this point. Presumably, Symeon went to Church many times during his boyhood and was impressed by many different texts from the Gospels; the hagiographers probably related what they heard from Symeon on different occasions. Cf. *Antony Life*, 2-3, tr. 493; *Syriac Life*, 509 (3ff.), tr. 112.

422 *Syriac Life*, 509/15-512/13; the story told by Theodoret *HR*, XXV, 3, is different, and no doubt concerns another of Symeon's visions or dreams. The *Syriac Life* tells of the early part of Symeon's life in some detail, cf. *Syriac Life*, 507-514; tr. 111-115.

423 *HR*, XXVI, 1, tr. 160. Symeon was regarded by believers as the equal of St Elias; on occasion he was even identified with him. Cf. Delehaye, *Stylites*, XXXI-XXXIV.

Symeon's form of asceticism attracted many followers and disciples, some of whom wanted to adopt the stylite life, while others wanted simply to benefit from his spiritual guidance.[424] There is no doubt that Symeon was the founder of stylitism in the Church and it may be that he was the world's first stylite.[425] Symeon died on Wednesday, 2nd of September, 459, after spending thirty-six years on the column: *On the fourth day of the week, in the second of the month Eylul* (September), *at the ninth hour, as all his disciples were present with him, he gave command to those about their companions and committed them all to our Lord.... Then again he lifted his eyes to Heaven and smote three times upon his heart with his right hand, and bowed and put his head on the shoulder of that first disciple. And the two disciples put their hands upon his eyes, and he surrendered his spirit to his Lord. So he fell asleep, and the labor and weariness and pain were over, when he put his head on the shoulder of that disciple, while they put their hands upon his eyes, and all the people stood and looked at him.*[426] Symeon was buried in the cathedral of Antioch.[427] Later, a vast basilica was built on the site of his column in Telnesin.[428] This is now known as Qal'a' Sema'an.[429]

424 On Symeon's social influence, cf. Brown, 'The Rise and Function of Holy Man', 127ff.

425 According to Lucian's *De dea Syra*, there was a pagan tradition of stylite life in Hierapolis. Cf. Toutain: 'Tous les ans, un homme monte au sommet de l'un de ces phallus et y demeure l'espace de sept jours. Voici la raison que l'on donne de cet usage: La multitude est persuadée que cet homme, de cet endroit élevé, converse avec les dieux, leur demande la prosperité de toute la Syrie, et que ceux-ci entendent de plus près sa prière....' Cf. also Delehaye, *Stylites*, CLXXVIII. Symeon could have been influenced by this pagan phallus, though his mode of existence was completely different in both motivation and style, and it is unlikely that there was any direct contact between Symeon and the pagan in Hierapolis. Cf. Delehaye, *Stylites*, CLXXVII-CLXXXV; Lent, 'Life', 103; Drijvers, 'Spätantike Parallelen', 77-113.

426 *Syriac Life*, 631/12-632/10; tr. 190. *Antony Life* and the *Syriac Life* differ on this point. *Antony Life* relates that Symeon died on Friday and the details of his death are also slightly different from the *Syriac Life*; cf. *Antony Life*, 28-33; tr. 377ff.

427 *Syriac Life*, 641ff; *Antony Life*, 29-33. Many important details of Symeon's life have not been mentioned at this point; most of the texts which directly concern his life will be cited elsewhere in this work.

428 On Telneshin, cf. Canivet, *Monachisme*, 172-175; Festugière, *Antioche*, 312; Peña, *Reclus*, 82.

429 Cf. Dau, *History of the Maronites*, 269-270: 'At a distance of about forty kilometers west of Aleppo, and sixty kilometers east of Antioch, there is one of the most beautiful churches of the world and the masterpiece of Syrian Christian art, the church of St. Simon Stylites.... Soon after Simon's death (i.e., 476-490) a magnificent cruciform Church was erected around his pillar'. Cf. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques* I, 227ff; Canivet, *Monachisme*, 175-180; Peña, *Stylites*, 30-31, 171-172; Dau, *History of the Maronites*, 269-275.

2. THE STYLITE AND THE OPEN-AIR LIFE

It can hardly be doubted that the origins of the stylite life are to be found in the open-air life.[430] The two differ only in respect of the column. According to his biographers, Symeon was not a disciple of Maron,[431] though that does not mean that he did not train in the open-air life. It is reported that he *dug a hole in a corner of the garden up to his breast, and he stood in it two years in the oppressive heat of summer and the severe cold of winter.*[432] The open-air life was always troublesome for the ascetic, who could not prevent people from touching him and disturbing his meditation. On that account some ascetics were obliged to protect themselves from the flood of visitors by withdrawing into unroofed enclosures.[433] Symeon had similar problems with visitors, which, according to Theodoret, were the main reason behind his decision to adopt the stylite way of life: *Since the visitors were beyond counting and they all tried to touch him and reap some blessing from his garments of skins, while he at first thought the excess of honor absurd and later could not abide the wearisomeness of it, he devised the standing on a pillar, ordering the cutting of a pillar first of six cubits, then of twelve, afterwards of twenty-two and now of thirty-six --for he yearns to fly up to heaven and to be separated from this lie on earth.*[434]

Like the open-air ascetics, Symeon endured all the severity of the seasons: *...he stood valiantly against the heat of the sun in summer, and against the severity of the cold in winter. Therefore the sun was like a crucible and that saint like gold. The fire therefore lowered its temperature, the furnace of testing grew cool, and the athlete of God came off victorious. For it says in scripture, 'Who can stand before his cold?'*[435] *For the north wind came with its snow, and the west with its ice, and the east with its gale, and the south with its sultriness; all of them combined together, accompanied also by heavy rain, and joined war with the wise master-builder who had built his house upon the rock. But the wind grew calm, the ice melted, and the rain was absorbed, and the Blessed One came off victor.*[436]

430 Cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 299, 310.

431 Some Maronite scholars count Symeon among the disciples of Maron: e.g. Dau, *History of the Maronites* I (in Arabic), 113ff. This claim is surely mistaken; in spite of the close relationship between the stylite and open-air lives, there is no evidence of any direct connection between Maron and Symeon.

432 *Syriac life*, 519/7-9; tr. 118.

433 Cf. *HR*, XXII, 3; XXIX, 2-3; XXX, 1, 3; XVIII, 2.

434 *HR*, XXVI, 12, tr. 165. There is a disagreement between the three sources concerning the height of the column. Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 214; Canivet, *Histoire* II, 184; de Vogüe, *Syrie centrale*, 149ff; Peña, *Stylites*, 36-37, 39ff; Delehaye, *Stylites*, CXLIX-CL; Leclercq, 'Stylites', 1709-1710.

435 *Ps.* 147, 17.

436 *Syriac Life*, 576/18-577/8; tr. 155.

Although Symeon's way of life attracted large numbers of spectators, he did not have many imitators. In the course of his lifetime not one disciple actually became a stylite. The disciples named in the sources imitated his virtues, not his stylitism. The first stylite after Symeon was Daniel the Stylite who mounted his column in 460.[437] Although there have been very few stylites over the years, after St Daniel there were a number in the Eastern Church, among them Symeon the Younger (+ 592), Alypius the Stylite, St Luke the Stylite, and St Lazarus.[438] The last recorded stylite lived during the nineteeth century.[439]

D. THE SHEPHERDS (BOSKOI)

The shepherds were hermits who lived the rough lives of wild beasts; their cells were caves and they lived on grass, roots, and fruits. Sozomen describes them as a radical tendency in the Syrian eremitic tradition. Many renowned ascetics were trained in this school: *Let us pass thence to Syria and Persia, the parts adjacent to Syria. We shall find that the monks of these countries emulated those of Egypt in the practice of philosophy. Battheus, Eusebius, Barges, Halas, Abbos, Lazarus, who attained the episcopal dignity, Abdaleus, Zeno, ar Heliodorus, flourished in Nisibis, near the mountain called Sigoron. When t first entered upon the philosophic career, they were denominated shephe because they had no houses, ate neither bread nor meat, and drank no wine, dwelt constantly on the mountains, and passed their time in praising God b prayers and hymns, according to the law of the Church. At the usual hours of meals, they each took a sickle and went to the mountain to cut some grass on the mountains, as though they were flocks in pasture; and this served for their repast. Such was their course of philosophy.*[440] Many hermits led a life comparable with that of the shepherds in the early history of Syrian eremitism. Although they are not referred to as 'shepherds', some *memre* attributed to St Ephrem describe hermits who lived in mountain caves, eating only grass and fruits.[441]

437 Cf. Delehaye, *Stylites*, XXXIV-LVIII; Dawes, *Three Byzantine Saints*, 1-84; Festugière, *Moines d'Orient* II.

438 Cf. Delehaye, *Stylites*, CXVII-CXLIII; Peña, *Stylites*, 79-84; Leclercq, 'Stylites', 1697-1698, 1706-1707; Ehrhard, 'Styliten'; Nöldeke, 'Sketches', 210-225. Historically, Syria was the best home for stylites. For more details see Leclercq, 'Stylites'; Thurston, 'Stylites', 317-318; Martigny, 'Stylites', 754; Spidlik, 'Stylites', 750-751; Hendriks, 'Stylites', 33-36; Lassus, 'Images de stylites', 65ff; Mouterde, 'Nouvelles images des stylites', 245-250; Merlat, 'Nouvelles images', 721; Vailhé, 'Les stylites', 303-307.

439 Cf. Delehaye, *Stylites*, CXXXVff.

440 Sozomen, *HE*, VI, 32; tr. 370.

441 Cf. Ephrem, *On Solitaries*, 70ff.

- *Heliodorus*

John Rufus reports the story of Heliodorus who lived in a similar manner to the Shepherds. He spent his time in the forests of Taurus in Cilicia, eating nothing but grass and parts of trees, and drinking only water. His long hair formed a mantle which kept him warm during the winter, and which gave him the appearance of a wild animal.[442] Heliodorus, who died c. 427, was called a shepherd by Rufus; his description might apply equally well to those Shepherds mentioned by Sozomen.

E. THE SLEEPLESS (AKOIMETOI)

The ascetic movement of the Akoimetoi originated in Syria and flourished on Byzantine soil. Its founder, Alexander, was not a Syrian, though he trained in a Syrian monastery and was deeply impressed by the ideals of Syrian asceticism.

1. ALEXANDER

There is only one text which relates the life of Alexander. For a long time it was known only in Latin translation; eventually, however, the Greek original was found.[443] Some mention of Alexander is also found in the life of St Hypatius,[444] in the life of St Marcellus, the abbot of the Akoimetoi,[445] and in the life of St Nilus.[446] Alexander was considered by his biographer to be *the*

442 'Le vénérable abba Pierre, évêque, nous racontait (ce qui suit) au sujet d'un certain saint qui s'appelait Héliodore, pâtre. Celui-ci quitta le monde et se rendit sur le sommet des montagnes et dans les forêts du Taurus en Cilicia; ayant élu domicile avec les animaux sauvages, pendant de nombreuses années, il y demeurait dans l'oubli des hommes; en guise de nourriture, il se servait sans préparation des pousses des arbres et des plantes sauvages; pour ce même motif sa chevelure lui tenait lieu de manteau hiver et été. Or des chasseurs de cerfs et d'autres animaux sauvages, venus selon leur coutume dans ces lieux, virent le saint de loin et crurent avoir affaire à un animal à cause de son état sauvge; il posèrent un filet et ils le prirent après qu'il eut passé beaucoup d'années dan ces genre d'ascétisme....', *PO*, VIII/1, 74-75.

443 Cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 185: 'In substance, we are fairly well informed about Alexander's person, his ambitions and activities. This we owe to a *vita* which, for a long time, was known only in its Latin version until the Greek text was found in an unique Greek codex *Ms. Par. graec.* 1452 of the 10th or 11th century. As an analysis shows, beneath the Hellenistic varnish, the document reveals the Syrian milieu and spirit...', E. de Stoop published the Greek text with its Latin version in *PO*, VI/5, 658-701. Vööbus, 'La vie d'Alexandre en grec', broadly accepts the value of this text but believes that some alterations were made to the Greek original. This life seems to have been written between 450-460, cf. Grumel, 'Acémètes', 169. Cf. English translation in *ARAM* 3, (1991).

444 Callinicus, *De vita S. Hypatii liber*, ed. Seminarii philologorum Bonnensis sodales, 118-120; cf. Pargoire, 'Un mot sur les Acémètes', 306-308. There is a more recent edition of the life of S. Hypatius by Bartelink in *Sources Chrétiennes*.

445 Symeon Metaphrastes, *Life of St. Marcellus*, 6-11; *PG*, t. CXVI, col. 712-716. Cf. Pargoire, 'Un mot sur les Acémètes', 304-308; Dagron, *La vie ancienne de Saint Marcel l'Acémète*, 271ff.

only man who shone forth in this wicked generation of ours - our Master bears witness that it is a wicked generation - obtaining for himself a double crown.[447] He was called by his followers: *The most holy and blessed Alexander, a man who attained apostolic stature....*[448] As a matter of fact, Alexander's biographer implored God to help him in writing the *spiritual struggle* of this exceptional holy man.[449]

Alexander was born on an island off the coast of Asia Minor around the middle of the fourth century: *This blessed man* (Alexander) *came from Asia, of distinguished parents, and lived on the islands. He received all his grammatical education in Constantinople. He grew to adulthood in sobriety and prudence, and served as an eparkhikos (prefect's guard).*[450] He read the Bible constantly and became convinced that the way to perfection was to sell everything, give away the proceeds to the poor, and then to follow the Lord: *In a short time he came to see that the things of this life were rotten and unsound, and that 'like the flower of the grass their glory passes away'.*[451] *He despised the things of this life as transient, and made the comparison with the better life. As he carefully studied the Old and New Testaments, he found in the holy Gospels a treasu inviolable and unfailing for those who come in faith to Him who says, 'If y would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you w have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me'.*[452] He chose Syria as the plac in which to pursue his ascetic life and began his training in the monastery of the Abbot Elias around the year 380: *Hearing this and sincerely believing it, without delay Alexander gave to the poor and needy his share of the wealth he had inherited and the things he had acquired during his military service - which were many, since he had been a prudent and brave eparkhikos.... He heard that in Syria, there were coenobitic communities in those parts which pursued that way of life with excellence. Nobly he made his way to them and asked [admittance], and entered into the monastery of the archimandrite Elias, most beloved of God, well known in those parts for the brotherly love, order and rules of his community.*[453] His biographer reports that he was not satisfied with

446 *PG*, 79, 997.

447 Stoop, *Alexander*, 4.

448 Stoop, *Alexander*, 1.

449 Stoop, *Alexander*, 1.

450 Stoop, *Vie d'Alexandre*, 5. Vailhé, 'Acémètes', 274 says: 'Les acémètes ont pour fondateur un certain Alexandre, né vers le milieu de IVe siècle dans une îles comprise entre Ténédos et Rhodes, le long du littoral asiatiques'. Pargoire, 'Acémètes', 304, thinks Archipel was the island of Alexander: 'Alexandre originaire d'Asie, vécut ses premières années dans les îles de l'Archipel'; cf. Vailhé, 'Acémètes'; Bacht, 'Akoimeten', 244.

451 *Jas.* 1, 10.

452 *Mt.* 19, 21; Stoop, *Alexandre*, 5.

453 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 6. The site of the monastery is not kown, cf. Vööbus, *History of*

monastic life because the abbot wished to provide for the needs of his community, while Alexander wanted to trust only in the providence of God:[454] *In the four years he spent there Alexander made progress in the Lord, fighting the good fight and being obedient in all things. He paid precise attention to whether this life was in accordance with the divine Scriptures. He found that it was not because, as those who study such things know, coenobitic monasteries do not have the evangelical freedom from possessions and cares, since the abbot is concerned with looking after all the needs of the brothers. But the servant of God Alexander, fervent in spirit and constantly hearing the Master's words 'take no thought for the morrow' and 'you are of more value than many sparrows', was perturbed and could no longer contain himself. He was not able to go into verbal battle from the first, because the time was not right; he first waited to acquire the spiritual armour which is the psalter.*[455]

Alexander was unable to convert the monastic community to his biblical ideal of poverty, so, after remaining there for four years he went to the desert to practise his life of poverty with Christ independently and freely. He spent seven years living a solitary life: *He* (Alexander) *took leave of all the brothers and, taking the holy Gospel, went off to follow what was written and emulate our holy fathers. And for a while he emulated the prophet Elijah and went into the desert, and lived there for seven years, having no care for anything worldly. But he was truly guided by the Holy Spirit.*[456] Then the word of God intervened and urged him to renounce his solitude and to preach the Gospel to people.[457] Immediately, Alexander engaged himself in a mission of preaching which lasted for the rest of his life, from 391 to 430. His first success was the conversion of a pagan village; he was obliged to leave it for the desert when the villagers demanded that he become their bishop.[458] There, in the desert beyond the Euphrates, Alexander converted thirty thieves to the Christian faith and trained them in the ascetic life, and thus founded his first monastery:[459] *When he* (Alexander) *saw that they* (the thieves) *were strong enough in their faith to be able to build up others, he appointed an abbot for them and strengthened them further in their faith; then he took leave of them and prayed over them, and went on his way rejoicing.*[460] *After travelling for two days, the spiritual Jacob reached the river Euphrates and crossed it.... With him* (Jacob) *in mind, the*

Asceticism II, 187.

454 Cf. Stoop, *Alexandre*, 7-8.

455 Stoop, *Alexander*, 7.

456 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 8.

457 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 663, 9.

458 Cf. Stoop, *Alexandre*, 23.

459 Cf. Stoop, *Alexander*, 24-25.

460 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 25. There is no clear idea of where this monastery was.

blessed Alexander prayed God to grant him to be accounted a second Jacob....[461] *Gradually, over twenty years, there gathered around him 400 men.... They formed four linguistic groups in all: Romans, Greeks, Syrian and Copts. He established a monastery and divided them into eight choirs to sing and chant to God with zeal and understanding. He divided the order of service and the worship into twelve parts.*[462] And they prayed *seven times a day and seven times a night.*[463] Alexander spent seven years in this monastic life, but he was looking for a harder ascetic life. Then he understood that he should sing unceasingly twenty-four hours to Lord: '*My Christ* (Alexander speaking) *revealed in creation twenty-four hours of the night and day; so let us spend the course of the day and night in twenty-four services, singing in praise of God. Our Saviour commands us to forgive our fellow-servants their sins against us unto seventy times seven....*'[464]

When Alexander had established the order of the unceasing prayer, he starte to organise a mission of preaching. He decided to lead the mission personall leaving the direction of the monastery to his disciple Trophimus. At that time had spent twenty years in this monastery.[465] He first assigned seventy disciple to it, but this number was increased later to one hundred and fifty. His mission of evangelisation led him towards the Mesopotamian desert, for he wanted to test the faith of his disciples in the harsh life of the wilderness:[466] *Crossing the river Euphrates once again, the blessed Alexander and the disciples he had chosen* (150 disciples) *went into the Persian desert, taking no necessities except the parchments on which they had the Holy Scriptures.*[467] Later, Alexander went to Palmyra where he found Jews and Christians in name only: *The blessed one went through all the desert with the brethren who sang without ceasing, and they came to the city of Solomon which is named in the Book of Kings, Palmyra, which he build in the desert. The citizens were Jews, and Christian in name only....*[468] After Palmyra, Alexander went to a place to meet his brother Peter, an archimandrite of a community, whom he had not seen for thirty years: *After four days' journey* (from Palmyra) *they came to the place where his brother was, his mother's son; he was archimandrite of a large community.... The most holy Peter, with all the brothers, besought him* (Alexander) *weeping to stay with them*

461 Stoop, *Alexander*, 26.
462 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 27.
463 Stoop, *Alexander*, 28.
464 Stoop, *Alexander*, 30.
465 If Alexander began his first mission ca. 391 and founded this monastery sometime after that date, one may date his time of departure to around 412/413.
466 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 31-37.
467 Stoop, *Alexander*, 32.
468 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 35.

just one day, and he declined. But after teaching them of poverty and divine love, he set off for Antioch.[469]

The bishop of the city, Theodotus (A.D. 418/21-427/29),[470] was against his presence in Antioch, for he was *influenced by certain wicked and hypocritical people (i.e. his exarchs)*[471] Malchos, a subdeacon, accused Alexander of assisting the population of the city in their fight against Porphyrius,[472] the enemy of St John Chrysostom.[473] In Antioch, Alexander and his disciples won the admiration of the people. The churches became empty because everyone wanted to hear them preach and to hear Alexander reproach the bishop, Theodotus, and the *magister militum* for their faults. As they were not permitted to pursue their monastic life on any religious site in the city, Alexander and his disciples occupied the empty baths. Alexander's presence did not please the bishop and the civil authorities. In 426/427,[474] Alexander and his followers were forced to leave Antioch.[475] He fled the city, eventually arriving at Krithemon, where he discovered that one of his disciples had founded a monastery there according to his rule.[476] Twenty-four disciples of the monastery of Krithenion then accompanied him to Constantinople,[477] where he established himself near the Church of St Menas: *When he went away, twenty-four of the brothers followed him as soldiers of Christ.... While he stayed near the house of the holy martyr Menas,*[478] *there gathered around him noble athletes of Christ from all*

469 Stoop, *Alexander*, 37.

470 Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 189: 'After Alexander had an unpleasant experience at Palmyra, he and his group went on to Antioch. This journey can be approximately dated. We are told that this tour took place at the time of Bishop Theodotus, who was raised to his seat in 418 (or 420/1-29?) and who ruled only nine years. Cf. also Festugière, *Antioche*, 296.

471 Stoop, *Alexander*, 38.

472 'Elected bishop of Antioch at Flavian's death (404), he is presented differently by our two main sources: Palladius's *Dialogue on the Life of St. John Chrysostom* and Theodoret of Cyrrhus's *Ecclesiastical History*. Acc. to Palladius, P. was John Chrysostom's enemy and a brutal man, dissolute and a political adventurer, persecutor of Constantius, who was Chrysostom's friend and a deacon of Antioch, the people's choice for the see; P. was consecrated with summary rites while the city was empty on account of the games at Daphne. Disorder then broke out, but was suppressed by the head of the army, Valentinus. The emp. Arcadius intervened to oblige all to enter into communion with P. (*CT* XVI, 4 6: 8 Nov 404; cf. PG 47, 13 and 37). But Theophilus of Alexandria and pope Innocent would not recognize him. Theodoret however presents him as a man who 'left many signs of his gentleness and prudence' (*HE* III, 35), for which 'his memory is holy' (*Ep.* 83) A surviving fragment of a letter of Theophilus informs P. of the calling of a council against the new followers of Paul Samosata.' *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, 704.

473 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 40.

474 The date is given by Vailhé, 'Acémètes', 274.

475 Cf. Stoop, *Alexandre*, 40-41.

476 Cf. Stoop, *Alexandre*, 42. This monastery has not yet been identified.

477 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 691-692.

478 'The cult of Menas originated in Egypt, but spread beyond its boundaries.... A legend reports

the local monasteries, men healthy in mind, belonging to three races: Romans, Greeks and Syrians, three hundred in all. He divided them into six choirs to perform unceasing hymnody....[479]

In Constantinople he suffered a fate similar to the one he had met with in Antioch: crowds gathered around him to listen to him expound the word of God: *The common people of the city saw the ascetic struggle that had been begun, the unceasing hymnody, the complete poverty and the glorious mysteries which were accomplished with many wonders; and they came to him readily, truly as to a benefactor and a teacher, and were taught by him about the hope and life to come. In a short time, he became a haven of salvation and an instructor of righteousness for all....*[480] Finally, Alexander was condemned by the ecclesiastical authorities and accused of heresy: *...but the enemy* (i.e demons) *could not bear to see this* (the spiritual prosperity of Alexander), *and can against the noble athlete* (Alexander) *like a hostile array. For they start by firi arrows at each other while they are still far off.... Then it was reported to th prefects that the monk Alexander was a heretic and wanted to destroy the Church of God.... Knowing that countries and cities are often betrayed by their own people, he* (the Evil One) *therefore attacked the blessed one in this way, and called his compatriots into an alliance, to carry them along with him. And they seized the blessed Alexander with his holy brothers and bound them, and inflicted deadly wounds upon them....*[481]

He was compelled to leave the city and went later on with his disciples to the city of Gomon in the Black Sea area[482] and died sometime afterwards, probably ca. 430:[483] *This blessed man* (Alexander) *lived the ascetic life for fifty years and*

that Menas's coffin swiftly floated to Constantinople; the relics were allegedly rediscovered at the time of Basil I. Menas was venerated particularly as a protector of pilgrims and merchants....' *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 1339.

479 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 43.

480 Stoop, *Alexander*, 44.

481 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 48-50. 'Thed chronology fo Alexander's life is far from clear: R. Janin (*EO* 33[1934] 340) asserts that Alexander arrived in Constantinople ca. 405 and founded the monastery of the Akoimetoi ca 420 (Janin, *Eglises CP* 16), but the vita places Alexander's quarrel with Theodotos, patriarch of Antioch (424-428) before his arrival. J. Pargoire (*BZ* 8[1899] 447) speculates that Alexander's expulsion from Constantinople must have taken place before 430, since Neilos of Ankyra alluded to Alexander's troublemaking....' *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 59.

482 Stoop, *Alexander*, 52; Callinicus, *Vita Hypatii*, 82-83; *Vita Marcelli*, IV, 709. 'Gomon is located northwest of Bithynia at the point where the Bosphorus and the Black Sea join each other', Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 192

483 The date of Alexander's death is uncertain: 'A supposer donc qu'Alexandre soit mort vers 430 (cf. Tillemont, *Mémoires*, XII, 682), le milieu du Ve siècle serait pour sa biographie un terminus post quem', Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 191-192, comments on this point: 'About the date of Alexander's death, we possess no information... It may be placed

was constantly afflicted, persecuted, naked, thirsty and hungry, and rejoiced in this, boldly teaching the word of truth and gathering many people to offer to Christ, as his disciples also do to this day. As he shone forth in these ways, his end came bringing him rest from his labours, blessed and free from care. He fell asleep in holiness and was buried in the region of Bithynia, in a place called Gomon.[484] The biographer of Alexander's life, who claims to be one of his disciples, states that his account is only a short summary, for it is impossible to relate all the wonders and deeds of Alexander the Sleepless (Akoimetos): *If we wanted to detail any further the virtues of this noble athlete, then, as the blessed Apostle Paul said, 'Time would fail me to tell'. What man could there be so great, and vouchsafed such inspiration, that he could recount the struggles of fifty years? To the unbelievers and enemies of good, because they are wholly carnal, even I shall perhaps seem to be talking about things that are impossible, exaggerated and surpassing human nature. But the faithful who are of one mind with us, those who consider their neighbours' good as their own, will accept that we speak the truth, convinced of what the Lord promised, that 'you will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these shall you do'*[485] *- when the disciples were amazed at the withering of the fig tree*[486] *- and again, 'all things are possible to him who believes'.*[487] *For we know that right living is the supreme sign, and that this perfect teacher had attained that....*[488]

2. COMMUNITY AND DISCIPLES

a. The Community and its Ideal

After the death of Alexander, the disciples continued their ascetic life as it was established by the founder. They increased in number and did not change the meaning of their name, *akoimetoi* (the Sleepless monks), but kept the unceasing prayer to praise the Lord day and night: *They made progress in the Lord, and many other brothers joined them. If one wished to travel the whole world under heaven and not just the land of the Romans, but also the barbarian lands, one would find disciples of this blessed man thriving. For they themselves then set up a distinguished monastery of 'sleepless ones', and many other large monasteries. For these monasteries were manifest to everyone, like the sun in the sky.*[489]

somewhere around the year 430. Also the memory of the church's liturgical tradition has been noteworthily weak. The Greek menologia do not mention Alexander at all. The Slavonic liturgical documents, however, celebrated him on February 23 and July 3'.

484 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 52.

485 Cf. *Jn.* 14, 12.

486 *Mk.* 20, 24.

487 *Mk.* 9, 23.

488 Stoop, *Alexander*, 52.

489 Stoop, *Alexander*, 51.

After he (Alexander) *departed this life, by his intercessions his disciples multiplied and gained in distinction, as he had said, not only in those parts but throughout creation. Those who had led their community established a monastery, as we have said, worthy of his way of life, and called 'of the akoimetoi' because of their unceasing and ever-wakeful praise....*[490]

There was one absolute rule in the lives of Alexander and his monks: the adherence to the Bible and especially the Gospel. Everything Alexander did had a Biblical foundation and he believed that every step of his apostolic life was guided by the word of God. When Alexander left the monastery of Abbot Elias he took nothing with him except the Bible and that remained his only book throughout his life. In fact, Alexander believed that the role of the ascetic life was to fulfil the teaching of the Scriptures:[491] *The servant of God Alexander paid precise attention to what was written in the divinely-inspired Scriptures and strove that not one tittle of God's commandments should escape him, t that he should imitate all the great men whose works have been written of....*[492] The understanding of the Bible was based on three main principals: T unceasing prayer, poverty and preaching. The unceasing prayer imposed o Alexander and his disciples the name 'sleepless' for they did not cease to praise God for twenty-four hours a day. As a result, Alexander was obliged to divide his ascetic flock into eight choirs, composed of four different nationalities: Syrians, Romans, Greeks and Egyptians. Then, later, he increased the number of the choirs to fourteen, seven for the day and seven for the night.[493] Alexander was so radical and absolute in his understanding of poverty that his community was forbidden to work and every disciple had to place complete trust in the providence of God, begging for his food from benefactors. A monk could possess nothing on earth except for a single garment:[494] *'Up to now* (Alexander speaking) *you have been partaking of milk. But if anyone wants to partake of solid food and desires to become a perfect Christian, let him sell his possessions and give to the poor, and take no thought for the morrow, and he shall have treasure in heaven. But let him seek the Kingdom of Heaven and the righteousness of God, as it is written, and all these things will be added unto him in addition'.*[495]

The apostolic life made Alexander and his community a restless people, anxious to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ among the Pagans. He believed that preaching is a duty of every Christian, for the Kingdom of God should be made

490 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 53.
491 Cf. Stoop, *Alexander*, 6-9. 12-13. 26. 28-32. 36-37. 44.
492 Stoop, *Alexander*, 28.
493 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 28-30.
494 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 7-8. 18-19. 35. 37. 45.
495 Stoop, *Alexander*, 18. Cf. *Mt.* 6, 25-34; *Lk.* 18, 22-23.

konwn to all people on earth. As a result, Alexander never stayed long in one monastery; he always prepared his community for a life independent of him and tried to maintain the apostolate as a nomad.[496] Alexander was really a charismatic figure who attracted people simply by his poverty and his love for Christ. Despite his persecution at the hands of the Church leaders, however, Alexander's disciples regarded him as the supreme authority above all others.[497]

One important aspect of Alexander's life is the information we have about the organisation of the monastic community in the Syrian Orient. We discover that the abbot has an absolute authority over everything spiritual and material in his monastery and all monks are submitted to his authority:[498] *Content with their love and their zeal, he* (Alexander) *went out again to seek those ensnared by the devil. Seeing the blessed man asking about everything in detail, and pointing to the distraction of the garden as a possible impediment to perfect virtue, the holy brothers were moved to compunction by the Holy Spirit....*[499] Alexander used to send some of the brothers to the cities and villages to perform some business activities. But we have no clear idea about the nature of this business and how often it was done: *The blessed one* (Alexander) *was in the habit of sending the younger monks out on monastery business. It happened, then, that one of them fell into promiscuity in the city, using the resources provided by God the Master on the brothers' account....*[500]

b - Rabbula

The life of Rabbula, bishop of Edessa,[501] occupies almost the third of the biography of Alexander's life.[502] He is described as being a convert of Alexander Akoimetos, who then later coverted him to the Ascetic life of the desert: *There was a certain citizen named Rabbula - a co-worker with the devil and a city father, distinguished as he was for his eloquence and for his wealth, who later condemned the idols and became a herald of the truth. Frenzied with idolatry, this man cried to the people in a loud voice: 'Brothers and fathers, let us not abandon our ancestral gods, but let us perform our sacrifices as usual. The gods have no part with this Galilean. Either it is through their forbearance*

496 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 4. 9. 17. 26-27. 31. 35. 38-39. 43-44.

497 Stoop, *Alexandre*, 3. 39. 42. 44.

498 Cf. Stoop, *Alexandre*, 8. 25. 31. 42.

499 Stoop, *Alexander*, 42.

500 Stoop, *Alexander*, 46. Cf. more details on the life of Alexander and his community in Schiwietz, *Das morgenländische*, 369-377; Marin, 'Acémètes', 304-308; Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 185-196; Hendriks, 'Les Acémètes'; Pargoire, 'Un mot sur les Acémètes'; Grumel, 'Les Acémètes'; Vailhé, 'Acémètes'; Bacht, 'Akoimeten'; Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique*, 20-21; 'L'Eglise byzantine', 76-79; Grillmeier, *Das Konzil von Chalkedon* II, 157ff.

501 See more details about his life in the beginning of this book.

502 Stoop, *Alexander*, 11-23.

towards man that they have not taken revenge on him for insulting them, or the God of the Christians is great'. Trusting in his power and befuddled by all the wiles of the devil, he said to all the people, 'I will go to him alone and destroy his magic and deceit, and avenge the gods and all of us who have been wronged by him'. He went up to Alexander in a great frenzy and started to argue with him....[503]

It is said in the *Life of Alexander* that Rabbula argued with Alexander about the Christian faith for the whole day, and he did not believe in Jesus Christ until he saw Aleaxnder performing a miracle:[504] *After seeing this miracle, Rabbula stayed with the blessed Alexander for a week, learning the word of truth in more detail. Convinced by these things, he then asked for enlightenment....*[505] Moreover, the *Life of Alexander* reported that the citizens of Edessa were also converted at the baptism of Rabbula: *Again, God performed many miracles through him* (Alexander). *For when he* (Rabbula) *had been baptised and come out of the font, his garment was found to be covered with crosses from head to foot. Through this sign, he was further strengthened in faith. Seeing the greatness of the change and the miracle, the citizens believed in our Lord Jesu Christ, with their wives and children. And they came to faith with such ardou that they hastened to receive the seal of holy baptism before they had even hear the word of God....*[506]

Alexander Akoimetos called everybody to follow his step to the desert near Edessa, for the strength of a real Christian faith can only be tested in the wilderness where emptiness and destitution reign. Rabbula and his family were among the first followers of Alexander, and there again the Lord performed another miracle through Alexander in order to confirm the faith of the newly baptised Christians.[507]: *Rabbula was strengthened in his faith by this sign. Desiring to be without distractions in his meditation on God, he gave the Council's property to the Council, and gave his wife's property to his wife and daughters and maidservants. His wife consented to her husband's plan, and set up a monastery, and remained there with her daughters and maidservants, serving the Lord with her whole heart. Rabbula freed his slaves, giving them an adequate allowance. He sold his property and clothing and gave to the poor, then went into the desert and took to asceticism with such severity that he could not be accounted as one clothed in a human body, persisting in fasting and vigil and prayer, constantly making satisfaction to the Lord for his sins and grieving over his former error.*[508] Then the story continues with the life of Rabbula and

503 Stoop, *Alexander*, 11.
504 Cf. Stoop, *Alexander*, 12-13.
505 Stoop, *Alexander*, 14-15.
506 Stoop, *Alexander*, 16-17.
507 Cf. Stoop, *Alexander*, 18-19.

reports how Rabbula was chosen by people to be the Bishop of Edessa, and he was a holy and good shepherd to everybody.[509]

It seems that the whole life of Rabbula in the *Alexander's Life* was an addition by a later compilator who wanted to give more credit to the orthodoxy of Rabbula as well as to the holiness of Alexander. It is very difficult to discuss to discipleship of Rabbula to Alexander, for we have no historical evidence of this fact, but everything is shrouded in ambiguity. Moreover, as Alexander became a legendary personality in the eyes of his disciples, one should cast some serious doubts on this special relationship between Rabbula and Alexander. This fact confirms that the *Life of Alexander* suffers from some inaxctitude for it was written by more than one author.[510]

508 Stoop, *Alexander*, 20.

509 Cf. Stoop, *Alexander*, 21-23.

510 For more details about this question, cf. Vööbus, 'La vie d'Alexandre en grec', who argues that the life of Rabbula was absolutely an addition, and it lacks historical evidence of some of facts and events. Cf. also Stoop, *Alexander*, 652-655, who is not satisfied with some vague information in the life of Alexander.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. A NOTE ON THE SOURCES

Here I will only mention the major sources for the eremetic Syrian movement which do not comprise part of the sources for early Syrian spirituality before the middle of the fourth century -- Ignatius of Antioch, *Didache*, Theophilus of Antioch, Tatian, the *Odes of Solomon*, *Didascalia*, the *Acts of Thomas*, and Aphrahat -- all of which are mentioned in the first part of this work.

1. SYRIAC SOURCES

a. Ephrem and Pseudo-Ephrem

Ephrem the Syrian was never a monk and he never went to Egypt to meet the Egyptian monks,[1] but he was certainly a distinguished theologian among the early Fathers and an ascetic in the Syrian church. In this work, however, only the eremitic sources for our section on the early Syrian hermits are to be mentioned and Ephrem becomes less important, firstly because his eremitic writings ar very scarce and secondly because only the *madrashe Concerning Mar Jaco and his companions* can be considered genuine.[2] There is substantial evidence that the following hymns, formerly attributed to Ephrem, were not written by him: *on Abraham Qidunaya* and *on Julian Saba,*[3] *a Letter to the Mountaineers,*[4]

1 Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 107 comments on this point: 'The sixth-century Syriac Life of St Ephrem, and later tradition in general, portrays the saint as a monk. This is already hinted at in Palladius' *Lausiac History* (written about 419/420), and specifically stated by the fifth-century church historian Sozoman who says (III, 16) that Ephrem 'devoted his life to the monastic philosophy'. These later writers and their readers will have associated Ephrem with the monasticism that sprung up in Egypt; and spread northwards to Syria and elsewhere with astonishing rapidity in the course of the fourth and fifth centuries. It is in order to associate Ephrem in a tangible way with prestigious Egyptian monasticism that the sixth-century life had made Ephrem actually travel to Egypt to visit St Bishoi. This later picture is misleading, for two reasons. Firstly, it is anachronistic, and secondly (and fundamentally more important) it ignores and neglects the existence of a native Syrian tradition of the consecrated life which may be termed 'proto-monasticism'. It was a tradition which later, for the most part, became fused with the Egyptian monastic tradition'.

2 Cf. Ephrem, *Nisibene Hymns,* XIII-XVI, these *madrashe* seem to have been written during 358. I use Beck's edition of the Syriac text in *CSCO* 218, pp. 34-40, and Gwynn's English translation in *NPNF* XIII, pp. 180-186.

3 Published by Beck, *Hymnen auf Abraham Kidunaya und Julianos Saba*. This piece is not by Ephrem. It seems to have been written by an ascetic who used the name of Ephrem and tried to imitate his style, though in view of its contents it probably belongs either to the late-fourth or early-fifth century.

4 The manuscript of this letter belongs to the ninth century and its attribution to Ephrem is doubtful. Burkitt, *St Ephrem's Quotations*, 24 and Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 2-4, regard the letter as genuine Ephrem. I do not share their opinion, and I would argue that the letter could be from the fifth century or even later. It is published by Overbeck, *Opera*

a memra about the solitaries,[5] *a memra about the anchorites, hermits and monks,*[6] *a memra on the anchorites, mourners and hermits,*[7] *a memra on the anchorites, mourners and dwellers in the wilderness,*[8] *and a memra on the solitaries, desert-dwellers and monks,*[9] *Admonitions of Mar Ephrem (to the hermits),*[10] These works appear to have been composed by a variety of authors and attributed to Ephrem to give them greater authority and interest. Some of these *memre* could belong to the late fifth century and perhaps later. In view of such uncertainty, particularly as regards the problem of dating, these compositions cannot constitute a basic source for the present study. Even if Ephrem were neither a monk nor an eremitic writer, however, his works on eastern Syriac theology are helpful in connection with some eremitic terms which are also genuine terms of traditional Syrian theology.[11]

Ephrem seems to have been born early in the fourth century, perhaps c.306 nd he probably came from a Christian family. He lived most of his life in lisibis, where he served as a deacon in the local church. After the death of ulian in 363, when the Romans handed Nisibis over to the Persians as part of a

Selecta, 113-131, and by Beck, *Sermones*, IV, 28-43.

5 The full title of this *memra* is: *A memra about the solitariness of the anchorites and the destitute life of the mourners, of the dwellers in the caves, on the mountains, in the hollows, in the rocks and in the clefts of the ground, and of the roaming ones* (translation from Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 4). This does not appear to be Ephrem's work; it could originate in the fifth or sixth century. It is published by Zingerle, *S. Patris Ephraemi*, 3-18; Rahmani, *Hymni de Virginitate* II, 66-79; Beck, *Sermones*, IV, 1-16.

6 The full title is: *A Memra on the anchorites, hermits and mourners, and the dwellers on the mountains, in the valleys, desolated places and in the hollows of the ground* (translation from Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 5). It is edited by Zingerle, *Monumenta Syriacca* I, 4-13; Rahmani, *Hymni de Virginitate* II, 81-95.

7 This *memra* is by Isaac of Antioch; it is published in Bedjan, *Homiliae S. Isaaci*, 49-70; cf. Vööbus, *Ephrem*, 75-78.

8 *A memra of Mar Ephrem about the solitaries, and mourners and those who dwell in wilderness on the desolated mountains* (translation from Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 9). I have not been able to see the unpublished manuscript of this work; it is mentioned by Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 9-10.

9 Published by Beck, *Sermones*, IV 16-28. This is the text referred to in the present work, along with the English translation of the Holy Transfiguration Monastery, *Isaac the Syrian*, 471-479: 'A homily on the solitaries, desert-dwellers and monks, and on those who dwelt in the mountains, dens, caves, and clefts of the earth, and on those who have stripped themselves of all things earthly'. This work could have been composed in the fifth century.

10 Published by Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 19-23. Although this work is certainly not by St Ephrem it seems to belong to the late fourth or early fifth century (cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, 18). The work does not comprise a true set of rules for daily monastic discipline; it is rather a series of admonitions aiming to correct the conduct of coenobitic hermits and to teach them some habits and customs of the eremitic Syrian life.

11 Cf. the *Commentary on the Diatessaron*, ed. by Leloir; and *De Virginitate*, ed. by Beck.

peace treaty, Ephrem moved to Edessa. He spent his last years in Edessa and died there on the 9th of June 373.[12].

b. Liber Graduum.

The *Liber Graduum* or the *Ktaba dmasqata* (the Book of Degrees) is an ascetic book of the Syrian Church, written in Syriac in the late fourth century.[13] Our interest lies mainly in the thirtieth homily: *On the faith and love of the single ones (iḥidaye).*[14] On the evidence of this homily it appears that the author may have been a hermit who spoke to this eremitic community with a special authority. As a whole, however, the *Liber Graduum* reflects many eremitical influences and it may have been addressed either to an ascetic group within the Syrian church or to an eremitic community.[15]

c. Rabbula

Rabbula was born in Kennesrin near Aleppo sometime during the second half of the fourth century. His father was a pagan priest while his mother was a Christian and he was educated in Syriac and Greek culture. He was converted to the Christian faith as an adult and thereafter had regular contacts with the Syria hermits who finally convinced him to become a monk, despite the fact that was married. His wife and his children also joined the monastic life. Rabbula monk was chosen to be the bishop of Edessa during 411-412, and his de seems to have occurred on 7th August 435.[16] Rabbula wrote some *Admonitio for the Monks*,[17] which were directed at certain deviations in the Syrian Coenobitic movement, and as such do not constitute a comprehensive code of discipline for Syrian hermits who were involved in community life. As a bishop and a monk, Rabbula used his position to try to correct the conduct of some Syrian hermits, but this fact does not prove that Rabbula intended to write a complete rule for the Syrian eremitic movement in the manner of Pachomius in Egypt, for example. The *Commands and admonitions of Mar Rabbula, bishop of Edessa to the priests and the Benai Qeiama*[18] serve the same purpose as the *Admonitions for the Monks.*

d. John the Solitary

John the Solitary, or John of Apamea, lived during the fifth century. As his self-explanatory names imply, he was probably from Apamea and was almost

12 On Ephrem's Life, cf. Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 3-5.

13 It is published in Syriac, with a Latin translation, by Kmosko in *Patrologia Syriaca*, vol. III.

14 Cf. *Liber Graduum*, 860-932.

15 For more details cf. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* I, 178-184; Bäss, 'Das Liber Graduum'; Davids, 'von der Anonymität'; Guillaumont, 'Situation et signification du liber Graduum'.

16 On the life of Rabbula, cf. Blum, *Rabbula von Edessa*. There is a different version of the life of Rabbula in the *Life of Alexander*, cf. details in this book pp. 386-388.

17 Published with an English translation by Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 27-33.

18 Published with an English translation by Vööbus, *Syriac and Arabic*, 36-50.

certainly a hermit. We know virtually nothing about his life and his education. On the basis of evidence found in his works on spirituality, he was well-versed in medicine and philosophy, as well as in his native spiritual tradition. John the Solitary represents the Greek influence in the Syrian eremitic tradition, though his work was written in Syriac and it maintains an authentic Syriac ascetic spirituality.[19]

2. GREEK SOURCES

a. Theodoret of Cyrrhus

Theodoret's *Historia Religiosa* is our main source of information for the Syrian hermits and the lives of most of the hermits discussed in the present work are recorded in this important book, which has been translated from the original Greek into several modern languages.[20] We do not know exactly when the *Historia Religiosa* was composed, but most scholars prefer a date of between 438 and 444.[21] Theodoret of Cyrrhus was probably born into a Christian family in 393. His first contacts with the Syrian hermits came through his mother who used to visit them to ask for their blessings. After the death of his parents he went to the monastery of Nicertae near Apamea and remained there as a monk until he became bishop of Cyrrhus in 423. From this date onwards he had many contacts with the hermits of his diocese and he remained a great admirer of the eremitic life until his death in 466.[22] Theodoret was an important figure in the history of the Syrian church and he was much involved in the Christological controversies of his time. His works remain an important source of information on the Syrian church during his lifetime. Theodoret did not write the lives of all the Syrian hermits, but limited himself to those who were either the spiritual

19 His work is published by Rignell, *Briefe and Drei Traktate*, and by Strothmann, *Johannes von Apamea*. On his life, cf. Hausherr, 'Jean d'Apamée'; Bradley, 'Jean le Solitaire'; Halleux, 'Le milieu historique'; Brock, 'John the Solitary'.

20 On the history of the *Historia Religiosa* cf. Peeters, *Tréfonds oriental*, 94-107; Canivet, *Histoire* I, 9ff; *Monachisme*, 27ff; Leroy-Molinghen, 'les manuscrits'; Price, *History*, xi-xxiv. The *Historia Religiosa* has been translated into French by Canivet, *Histoire des moines de Syrie* I & II; into English by Price, *History of the Monks of Syria*; and into Arabic by Shakkour, *Tarikh Asfiyau al'Lah* (The History of the Friends of God). I use Price's English translation, referred to as *HR*.

21 Cf. Lietzmann, *Das leben*, 237-238, who argues for a date between 438 and 440; Leroy-Molinghen, 'A propos de la vie', 382, and Canivet, *Monachisme*, 31-34, both of whom argue for a date of 444; and Price, *History*, xiii-xv, who believes that 440 was the year of composition.

22 On Theodoret's life and his contacts with the hermits, cf. *Epistles*, 80-81, 113, 119; *HR*, IV, 9; VIII, 15; IX, 4ff, 15; X, 4; XII, 4; XIII, 3, 16, 18; XIV, 1; XVIII, 2, 4; XXI, 6-8, 10, 15, 33; XXII, 3; XXIV, 3-4 ff; XXV, 2; XXVIII, 1; XXIX, 5; XXX, 3-8; also Canivet, *Monachisme*, 37-63.

masters of different eremitic communities or famous figures in early Syrian eremitism.[23] Theodoret's work indicates clearly that these early Syrian hermits did not take much part in the coenobitic life, but sought to live independently from one another in great freedom.

b. John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom seems to have been born during 354 into a Greek Syrian family of Antioch. At an early age he was educated in Greek rhetoric in the school of Libanius in Antioch, and as an adult he started to take a serious interest in the monastic life which impressed him deeply. He spent about six years in the monastic life, from 375 to 381, living on Mount Silpius near Antioch: four years were spent under the direction of a Syrian hermit and two years alone as a recluse in a cave. He was obliged to give up his life as a recluse due to illnes and he returned to Antioch to serve his church as a priest. In 398 he w appointed bishop of Constantinople, against his will, but five years later he w deposed, owing to court intrigues. Chrysostom died in exile in 407.[24] St Jol Chrysostom is an important source for early Syrian theology and eremitism, especially in and around Antioch, both because of his love for the Syrian hermits and because of his personal experience of the eremitic life. His three treatises on the monastic life, *Against the enemies of monasticism*, were apparently written either during his life as a monk or immediately after his return to Antioch.[25] Throughout Chrysostom's works there are frequent, if brief, references to the life of the Syrian hermits.

c. Miscellaneous

Sozomen's *Ecclesiastical History*, written between 439-450, mentions the Syrian hermits many times, expecially the *Boskoi*. Jerome spent about two years (375-377) with the Syrian hermits, mainly in the desert of Chalcis. He wrote several letters during that period, one of which, *Letter XVII*, contains a discussion of the Syrian hermits of Chalcis. Jerome also wrote the life of the hermit *Malchus* whom he met during his travels in Syria.[26]

223 Cf. *HR, Prol.* XXXI, 1ff.

224 On Chrysostom's life in Antioch, cf. Baur, *Johannes Chrysostom;* Festugière, *Antioche*, 328-346.

225 Cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 192-210.

226 Cf. *Letters*, V-XVII, written during his time in Chalcis; for more details on Jerome's time among the Syrian hermits, cf. Festugière, *Antioche*, 415-418.

B. PRIMARY SOURCES

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